A STORY-TELLER'S HOLIDAY

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A Story-Teller's Holiday GEORGE MOORE

A STORY-TELLER'S HOLIDAY

BY GEORGE MOORE

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME

HORACE LIVERIGHT
New York

A Story-Teller's Holiday.
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Printed in the United States of America

Dear Lady of my thoughts, dear Lady Cunard, Time turns all things into analogues and symbols, and in the course of the years I have come to think of you as an evening fountain under embosoming trees. The fountain murmurs, sings, exults; it welcomes every coming minute; and when the dusk deepens in the garden and the gallants enfold their ladies in scarves and veils and the rout disperses, the fountain sings alone the sorrows of the water-lilies to the moon.

G. M.

PREFACE

IT was a few days after his operation that I visited George Moore in the Nursing Home and saw his cheeks white and drawn and his figure pitifully shrunk beneath the red dressing-gown. But the voice bore no trace of the sickness that had wasted him, and it was in the old ringing tones that he spoke to me of the work that awaited him in Ebury Street. I shall have little leisure or strength for the revision of books already published, he said, and the new edition of the *Story-Teller's Holiday* will have to go without a preface. This will chagrin Evans, who likes prefaces. I waited a little before hazarding the suggestion that he might employ another to see the work through the press. But who? he asked abruptly, and began to speak of the trouble of sending for an editor, to whom many explanations would have to be given, all of which would be misunderstood, more or less. He looked at me inquiringly, as a man looks who is about to ask a boon, and I read in his eyes that he was seeking a prefacer in me. It is not from laziness that I ask you to write a preface, he said at last, but because I have been thinking lately that my life is running out and that I would do well to save these last days for my Greek story, *Aphrodite in Aulis*. The *Story-Teller's Holiday* needs only a few words of preface, and though not Irish yourself your knowledge of Irish ways of thought and of language, will enable you to write the lines that I have in mind better, perhaps, than I should myself, even if I had strength and courage to tell that in the third and fourth centuries the pious were encouraged by the Church to go into temptation, and by

resisting it to win for themselves higher places in heaven than would have been allotted to them if they had avoided the battle between God and the Devil—a practice early forbidden by Rome, but which continued in Ireland into the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. I had it from Kuno Meyer, and I think you were with me the evening in which he mentioned it.

Kuno Meyer's hint may be compared to the mustard seed; as prolific it has proven itself to be; and George Moore told me that the book was written without flagging from day to day, tale succeeding tale without pause. The end of one was not in view when the characters for the next were clamouring about the table, demanding expression from George Moore or from Alec Trusselby, the *shanachie* or traditional story-teller from Westport. Alec was necessary to him; he had to project himself; and the *Story-Teller's Holiday* may be described as a dialogue between the original and the acquired self. These two meet and exchange stories and ideas about their craft, and enjoying themselves hugely in the high wood above Westport Lodge they transmit their enjoyment to the reader. And here I would mention that it was the joyous spirit pervading the whole of the *Decameron* rather than the individual stories that drew from Landor the extravagant words with which he praises Boccaccio. The infection was upon him when he wrote that the *Decameron* contained 'more character, more nature, more invention than either modern or ancient Italy, or than Greece ever claimed or knew.' The same joyous spirit led the hours when Queen Margaret of Navarre dictated the *Heptameron* to her waiting-maids whilst they dressed her, and it was in the influence of these Renaissance stories that Balzac wrote the *Contes Drolatiques,* and he leaves us to infer from many stray remarks in his prefaces that it is the business of every considerable writer to produce at least one joyous book.

With these echoes from the Renaissance the *Story-Teller's Holiday* does not challenge comparison; its faults and its merits are part of its originality. The stories are spontaneous inventions, with here and there an oddment of folk-lore, and in the rich Anglo-Irish idiom they carry a fragrance of newly-upturned earth.

The reader will remember George Moore's assurances when in the Home and near to dying that enough time was not left to him to write prefaces or to revise new editions of old books. 'The Devil was sick, the Devil a monk would be; the Devil was well, the Devil a monk was he!' and when George Moore returned to Ebury Street it was to revise *Ulick and Soracha* for inclusion in the present text and to discover a stronger motive for the carrying off of Soracha from her convent. On looking deeper into the heart of the trouvère he was able to develop a motive which existed in germ in the original text, and before putting his hand to *Aphrodite in Aulis* he added another story, *Dinoll and Crede,* which although the shortest in these volumes is perhaps the most perfect.

ERNEST LONGWORTH.

A STORY-TELLER'S HOLIDAY

CHAP. I.

THE Irish mail passes out of Euston Station with the easy movement of a deep, smooth river, or of a reptile gliding over soft grass, and the feeling of contentment and well-being, almost of happiness, produced by the vague rhythm of the train is augmented by the beauty of the fields and their hedgerows unfolding mile after mile under the languor of a June sunset. And all this while the traveller perceives the elms showing fine design on the fading day, rising out of the hawthorns with noble gesture—Almost like sculpture, he murmurs, as he yields himself to admiration of the trees advancing and retiring, forming into groups at the corners of the fields and collecting into woods on the hill-sides. And no sooner have they collected themselves into woods, he says, than they disperse to gather themselves again into thickets, shaws and copses. Going to Ireland, he continues, is like travelling through a forest with clearings in it. The word forest, however, does not satisfy him; it is too evocative of wild and uncouth nature, such as we have not here, he adds. A chase, perhaps, but even a chase conveys an idea of wild landscape, and this one is deliberately wooded; it is a well-ordered domain through which the train carries us like a smooth river. And the feeling of contentment and well-being, almost of happiness, that began to take possession of him soon after the train left London returns now exalted by what remains of the sun-

set: a faint flush seen through grey clouds. A bygone sunset, the traveller remarks, taking pleasure in the words. We pursue the sunset, he mutters to himself, and, amused by the thought that himself and his fellow-travellers are raiders in pursuit of the sunset's gold, he begins to dream a romantic fable, and the paragraphs end so prettily in his dream that he thinks he has written the story, and experiences on arriving at Rugby some faint surprise when the newspaper boy does not offer to sell him a book entitled *Sunset's Gold,* with his name upon it—Just published, sir.

The dreaming traveller is none other, O reader, than thy friend George Moore, come to entertain thee once more; and having robbed the sunset's gold, reader, we are now flying through the night, pursued by the Dawn, who would recover the gold robbed of her sister. Thou'lt forgive this attempt to entertain thee with a literary sequel as false as such things usually are, and thou shalt not be imposed upon. Between London and Rugby we did seem like travellers in pursuit of the sunset, but when the train rolled out of Rugby we became commonplace travellers on our way to Dublin, myself ashamed of my fable, at least of the second part of it, and glad to know that nobody need ever hear anything about it, not even my publisher. And feeling that the moment had come for reading the evening paper, I opened it, but it proved to be so eventless that I was compelled into a deep scrutiny of the man sitting opposite to me. But despite my study of him, he has passed out of my mind I fear for ever. All I can recall in present time is a tall man of rather common appearance, who spoke with a brogue and told me that he travelled for—— Again my memory is at fault, I cannot remember if he was in the dry goods or the whisky line, but am persuaded that our conversation began with: I hope, sir, we shall have a fine crossing.

Of course, I answered, we shall have a fine crossing,

how can you doubt it? At which my fellow-traveller's face became overcast, and after a pause he said: May I ask, sir, why you're sure we shall have a fine crossing? Because I am I—an alarm-provoking remark that I sought to quieten later, saying that having crossed the Irish Sea so many times without seeing anything like a wave I had come to regard the Irish Sea as waveless. Elsewhere there are waves, no doubt; we read of waves in the newspapers and in books, and my friends have spoken to me about waves, but so far as my own experience goes waves do not exist. And after all, I added, one must be guided by one's own experience rather than by what one reads and hears; isn't that so?

My fellow-traveller looked at me inquiringly, and as if dissatisfied with his examination of my face returned to his newspaper. But soon after I began to notice that he was watching me again over the rims of his spectacles, and like one who is unable to conquer his curiosity he asked if I attributed my good luck on the sea to the fact that the sea did not wish to destroy me. On the contrary, I answered, the sea is kind to those whom it has elected to destroy. My life will end in the sea, but not in the Irish Sea. You believe then, sir, that life and death are determined at birth and that none can escape his fate? Before I can answer you I must ask if you're a Protestant or a Catholic. But it doesn't matter which; in either case you believe that not a sparrow falls to the ground except by the will of God. Isn't that so? He answered that he believed God to be all-knowing, and again returned to his paper. At Crewe, however, he laid it aside and poked his head out of the window. I think you're right, sir, we shall have a fine crossing. Did I not tell you, sir, that there are no waves when I cross the Irish Channel? You're unbelieving and incredulous, yet you wear the credulous Catholic face. And till we reached the Menai Bridge I related the story of Peter

and Paul, making plain to him the fact that Protestantism and Catholicism were founded on the same day at Antioch. But as no trace of the objections he raised to my theology between the Menai Tunnel and Holyhead is discoverable in my memory, I presume that we wearied a little of each other during the journey across Anglesea: or else we became so absorbed by the beauty of the twilight that we forgot Peter and Paul, as excellent a thing to do as it is to remember them, for had it not been for Peter and Paul I might not have been able to abandon myself wholeheartedly to the beauty of the almost transparent veil that falls across the sky in June, dividing night from day by not more than two or three hours, and to the almost equal beauty of the twilit sea.

In another hour the first gulls will be flying round us, I said to myself, and sat with my eyes fixed on the east till I beheld bars of silver and a great phantom ship looming through the dusk. The night, I said, has begun to evaporate like a pale curl of blue smoke; it was not much more, I added, and dropped into dreams of the romance of sails rising, yard after yard, the topgallant yard melting into clouds and the sails drawing the great ship charged with many destinies away, whither? Perhaps to end by the firing of a German torpedo. At these words I felt for the tube whereby my life-belt was inflated, saying, and saying well: If we be torpedoed I have as good a chance to be saved as another, for as soon as the torpedo crashes into us I shall blow out the life-belt and shall be picked up in not less than an hour or two of immersion in the cool sea, somewhat exhausted but alive.

CHAP. II.

IT must have been soon after this pleasing thought that the gentleman in the dry goods or the whisky line who had travelled with me from Rugby took the seat beside

me. We had a fine crossing, he said, and I answered: That is not surprising, for I was with you. But by this time I was weary of my little joke, and from a certain embarrassment in his manner I judged that he, too, was weary of it. Have you ever been for a long sea voyage? he asked, and I answered him that I had never been across the Atlantic, but had been six days out to sea, from Marseilles to Port Said. And never seen a wave? he inquired. At most a slight swell, a wave implies a white crest, I replied, and seeing that he was not averse from hearing an account of my voyage I began to tell a dream that has murmured in me ever since my father took me on his knee to tell me his travels. As far back as I can remember, I said, the Mediterranean has appeared always in my imagination as the bluest of seas and as the birthplace of all beautiful legends and stories. The bluest and beautifullest of seas, I added, hoping to cow my fellow-traveller with alliteration. But he was eager for some information regarding Marseilles, and I told him briefly of the strange white shore that we sailed past, chalk cliff or salt, ghostly shores, I said, on which nothing grows. A rabbit could not pick up a living, I interjected. But weren't you curious to know if it was a promontory or an island that you sailed past? I had no mind for geographical details, I was thinking of Sicily, for it was in Sicily that rugged Polyphemus peering over some cliffs discerned Galatea in the foam, and it was on the Plain of Enna that Proserpine was raped while gathering flowers with her maidens; but none of my fellow-travellers could be persuaded to listen to these stories, and I swore that when I descended to the dusky halls where she sat beside Pluto I should not forget to bring her a branch of wild apple bloom to remind her of this world's beauty, almost forgotten by her. But these beautiful legends were unknown to the passengers; none had a thought to see anything but a vulgar volcano erup-

tive on the horizon. I begged of them to remember that we should soon be passing the very place where Jupiter disguised in the form of a bull carried away Europa for his pleasure and for hers. But you, sir, are perhaps as indifferent to these stories as they, yet the garlanded bull, stemming the waves, Europa keeping her seat on one shoulder by the help of a horn, the sea nymphs singing hymns and throwing their tresses for joy in the air while Tritons blew conch shells, was a finer sight than a volcano. But, said my companion, you don't believe in these legends? Nobody knows what he believes, I replied, and nothing is certain but our attachment to the legends that represent our ideas and help us to live. Moreover do not all mythologies rely upon the union of divinity with the mortal; and does not Deity in all the mythologies take the form of some beast or bird? In one story the Deity is a bull, in another an eagle, in a third a dove, two women at least were trodden by birds. I looked into my companion's eyes and waited for an outburst. But he sat unmoved. Have I said anything that seems unreasonable to you? I asked. I'm thinking, he rejoined, that you'll not be finding many in Ireland that will appreciate the stories you are telling me. You're not on a preaching errand, are you? No, I'm not going to preach anything. Then you're going to Ireland to see the ruins? I answered that I always took an interest in ruins wherever I might find them and that it was for its ruins that we all loved Ireland; and this remark led us straight into the Ulster question.

Without Ulster, my companion said, there can be no Home Rule, and I asked him if he could tell me why the Catholics were so anxious to get Ulster, and if he could explain how Ireland could be free if Ulster was to be coerced. My fellow-traveller stiffly repudiated any desire on the part of the Nationalist Party for help to coerce Ulster, and begged me to believe that the National Party

only desired Ulster because Home Rule would be impossible without Ulster. Neither coercion nor cajolery, he cried; let them come in like men and help us to build a new Ireland. We became strenuous, and continued strenuous till I began to perceive we were missing the sunrise. The dawn is breaking, I said; tell me if you think there are tones as beautiful as those flower-like blues on any painter's palette, or a rose as pure as those little puffy clouds like Cupids. I agree with you, he replied; but without Ulster there can be no Home Rule; we must have a business head. Let us not talk of Home Rule, but admire the morning sun. And now a word of advice: if Roman Catholics could think more of the sunrise and less about Ulster there might be a sunrise in Ireland. Look, I said, how the sun flashes above the horizon. You don't believe then, he asked, that through a rising tide of discontent Mr. Asquith will bring about a settlement? You'll have to define the word settlement before I can answer you, I said. Nothing is ever settled in this world. Everything is becoming. We can have no knowledge of anything, for nothing in this world is permanent, unless talk. In Ireland talk is permanent and yet—— But I have no wish to criticise, I withdraw that last remark. And you'll do well to withdraw the remark you made about Mr. Asquith, who visited a hospital and addressing himself to a wounded Sinn Feiner said: What do you think now of the rebellion? The wounded boy's answer was: Well, I think it was a grand success. And why do you think that? was the unabashed Minister's next question. Well, sir, because you're here. If the Irish have lost everything else, they haven't lost their wit. But are you sure that the boy's answer did not come out of an innocent heart? I inquired, and my fellow-traveller no doubt gave an answer, but it must have been a flat one else I should have remembered it, and bidding my fellow-traveller good-bye I said to myself: I'll

consult the jarvey that drives me from the station. . . . What will content you? I asked. Sure we don't want to be contented, he replied, and it seemed to me that he had, unwittingly, expressed a human feeling.

CHAP. III.

A FEW hours later the young doctor who supplies Dublin with jokes entertained me on the steps of the Shelbourne Inn with his views, telling me that it was the rebellion in Dublin that had given the English army a chance of redeeming its credit. In every other encounter it has come off second-best, he said, but in Dublin it can claim a victory, a plausible set-off for the defeat of Kut. He, too, represents another phase of the Irish mind, the one that sees a joke or an epigram in all circumstances, thereby contriving to survive an habitual discontent. But are there no ruins in Stephen's Green? I asked, and he told me the finest were to be seen in Sackville Street, adding, that the oven changes many an ugly carcass into a sweet-smelling roast. The oven improves us all—houses as well as men and beasts, fishes and birds, and potatoes are better baked than boiled. Good-bye till dinner-time. And after dinner? I said, I will go to see the ruins; they will be looking their best after sunset. But dinner was prolonged with conversation until the moon rose, and then, remembering a phrase of Balzac's 'In the moonlight the Place de la Bourse is a dream of old Greece,' I said to myself: Ruins are seen best by moonlight. But my host continued his rambling talk till long after midnight, and the moon was waning and *The Irish Times* was printing when I reached the Liffey and saw the great skeleton façades lifting themselves up in the night.

Many of the buildings, the Imperial Hotel and the Post Office, appeared at first sight uninjured, but at

second sight it was plain that they were but empty shells. I shall have, I said, to wait for the sunrise to see these ruins. At present they are but phantoms, a city that has passed away—shapeless mounds that might be of Babylon. I shall have to wait for another hour for some traces of Dublin to appear, ruined portico or broken column, which? But martial law still prevails, I continued, and arrest, though it lasts but a minute, is unpleasant. I will adjourn to the office of *The Irish Times* and write paragraphs till dawn; and though rubble heaps afford but slight pasture for the picturesque pen, it may be that I shall discover something. Nature is so various that I cannot fail to find something unexpected and significant if I search long enough. Even if the space in to-morrow's paper be filled he might like an article—on what? I asked myself. And in the hope that a subject would come into my mind whilst talking I went upstairs unabashed (the editors of Irish papers receive visitors whilst waiting for proofs), and it was not till one o'clock that I began to notice that the editor began to weary of conversation. My proofs are late to-night, he said, but they cannot be long delayed; and the finest ruins are beyond Rutland Square. You might walk round that way; and his last advice to me was to look out for a building that had been shelled near Amiens Street Station.

Ten minutes' walk took me thither. But how am I to describe picturesquely a wall twenty feet high by forty feet long with a hole in it? I asked myself, and returned to Henry Street wondering what the descriptive reporters attached to the newspapers had written about the ruins. They can describe anything, even a boat race, I said, for description is their business. And it was while thinking about their art and Marius among the ruins of Carthage that I escaped as by a miracle from falling into a cellar in which I should certainly have died, discovered by my

stench at the end of a week, and whoever found me would go back to the office of the *Times* with excellent copy. A lugubrious story truly of a reporter who died in a cellar in Henry Street, and one that soon changed to a story of a reporter who committed suicide amid the ruins because he could not describe them. Not being able to produce copy he became copy, I said, and I'm minded to follow his example, for have I not promised to write an article and up to the present have discovered only a strip of wall-paper hanging from a ruined wall which I could have seen in London any day: pathetic, no doubt, but poor pasturage for the picturesque pen. All the same, the mantelpiece up above is a fine specimen; and with much literary sympathy I fell to examining a broken mantelpiece over which hung an overmantel, its mirror still intact and a piece of ornamental crockery and a little French clock still upon its shelves. Here is my symbol, I said, somewhat commonplace, but the best I shall find. A pleasant home, no doubt it once was, and in my imagination I saw a family collected round the fender after the evening meal, mother reading a tale from a popular magazine to the children, the cat purring upon her knees. A somewhat commonplace subject for an article, I said, but one that will please the readers of *The Irish Times*. A plaintive 'Miaw' reached me, and a beautiful black Persian cat appeared by the fireplace. A cat is almost articulate, and Tom asked me to explain to him the meaning of all this ruin. He has found his old fireplace, I said, and tried to entice him; but, though pleased to see me, he would not be persuaded to leave what remained of the hearth on which he had spent so many pleasant hours, and pondering on his faithfulness and his beauty I continued my search among the ruins, meeting cats everywhere, all seeking their lost homes among the ashes and all unable to comprehend the misfortune that had befallen them. It is true that

the cats suffer vaguely, but suffering is not less because it is vague, and it seemed to me that in the early ages of the world, shall we say twenty thousand years before Pompeii and Herculaneum, men groped and suffered blindly amid incomprehensible earthquakes seeking their lost homes, just like the cats in Henry Street. We are part and parcel of the same original substance, I said, and then my thoughts breaking off suddenly, I began to rejoice in Nature's unexpectedness and fecundity. She is never commonplace in her stories, we have only to go to her to be original, I muttered, as I returned through the silent streets. I could have imagined everything else, the wall-paper, the overmantel, and the French clock, but not the cats seeking for their lost hearths, nor is it likely that Tourgéneff could, Balzac still less.

CHAP. IV.

A WEEK goes by easily amid renewals of friendship, and verifications of the people of 'Hail and Farewell,' one after the other—a roll-call in fact, all answering their names except Bailey and Yeats; Bailey died a few months ago, and already Dublin society has forgotten him. His gift was atmosphere. He brought an atmosphere of happiness into the room; a precious gift truly for the conduct of life, but one so easily appreciated that it is forgotten as easily as the passage of a pleasant breeze coming and going in and out of a garden. Yeats now lives, or is going to live, in a ruined castle in Galway, for the sake of the spectres—such is the report, which, however untrue, is an acceptable explanation of his strange choice of dwelling—himself having become a myth from too long brooding on myths, and myths being, if not spectres, at least of the same kin. Another report avers that his retirement may be attributed to his belief that the poet should apply himself as soon as his poetry

is written to the weaving of a 'Poetic Personality.' And at once the ruined castle rises before our eyes, for has it not been said that a poet must live in a cabin or a castle, these two dwellings representing the poles of humanity? Yeats' belief in his relationship to the Duke of Ormond precludes the cabin, and piecing the two reports, or shall we say the two myths, together, we seem to be justified in imagining him in the vaulted hall of the castle of Ballylee —weaving the myths that will preserve his works when all life has departed from them, passing the shuttle to and fro, weaving industriously, Lady Gregory standing by him, distaff in hand.

And these twain visionaries recall my old friend, the Comte Villiers de L'Isle Adam, for Villiers believed himself to be the heir to the great name, and the conviction strikes root immediately that he would have welcomed Yeats as a dream for himself or as a subject of a story for others, summarising our poet in some melancholy and ornate phrase spoken by Yeats as he rises from the loom of poetic personality one sultry summer afternoon before going down to Coole. Though my heart be empty of all else, he would say, his eyes wandering over the escutcheoned walls (escutcheoned in his imagination), though my heart be empty of all else, I bear in it at least the sterile glory of many forgotten dukes.

CHAP. V.

YOU are going by the Limited Mail, sir? the porter asked me overnight, and I answered that I hoped to catch the train. There'll be neither breakfast nor bath, I murmured, and went away to my room, dreading the mental struggle that would befall me in the morning. Nor was it less tough than I had imagined, and had not the porter stood over my bed I should have slept till midday. My father was the same before me, I said, one to whom

an early rise was intolerable; only to see a horse gallop could he manage it—a remark intended to win the porter's forbearance. All Irishmen like a *harse,* I added, and began a search for my clothes. At seven minutes past the half-hour a car arrived drawn by a horse that only a goat-herd could distinguish from a goat, and seeing that the animal did not inspire belief in his power to reach the station in time, the driver began to condone his appearance, saying it was the worst part of him; and leaving the last glimpse of the flowering green behind us, we turned into Grafton Street, a desert, as all streets are at seven in the morning, but the emptiness of Grafton Street surprises us more than the emptiness of any other street, so accustomed are we to see it filled with thronging passengers. Its faint descent tried the powers of the horse to keep back the car, and so feeble were his totterings that I began to fear we should miss the train, but forgot my fears as soon as we emerged from its narrowness, for the beauty of the day appeared in a delightful blueness overhead and in shadows falling westward from the pillared porticoes of the noble bank. We'll be there in time, said the jarvey, and whilst passing through a region of destruction I was about to beg him not to whip his horse, but before the words were spoken I remembered that if he did not urge his horse up the hill-side I should be confronted to-morrow with the necessity of rising at six. It behoves him to suffer, I said to myself; we suffer differently, but we all suffer. My suffering is to witness the stripes, his to feel them; soon they will be forgotten. But we cannot command forgetfulness, and no sooner had I settled myself in a seat in the train than the pitiful destiny of the horse rose up in my memory and remained with me till the train had rolled some little distance. After all, I said, none of us does more than to achieve his destiny; and with the same industry that he applied himself to his,

let me apply myself to mine, which is clearly to recall the city as it was all last week, engarlanded with chestnut, laburnum and lilac bloom, with hawthorns leaning over every railing. White, pink and rose hawthorns, one as beautiful as the other, I continued, my thoughts drifting into memories of last year, it pleasing me to imagine myself in the part of Paris, with this difference: that my trouble was not to discriminate between three beautiful women, but three beautiful trees—a more difficult task than the one accomplished on Mount Ida. The white may be the beautifullest, but which smells the sweeter, the pink or the rose? I asked myself, this year's bloom or last year's? The blooms in memory are always sweeter than the blooms on the bough. And on awakening fully from my meditation I saw a country passing by me—In all the madness of May, I said, for the sixth of June is as much May as June; and on this remark or aphorism, whichever it may be, my thoughts fled away like the cuckoo at the end of June. Whither they went I know not; nor do I know whither the cuckoo goes, or the salmon, only that bird and fish return, and that our thoughts return, too, sometimes bearing in their beaks new thoughts—if thoughts have beaks, and who will say they have not, and sharp claws? Presently my thought returned from London to Ireland bearing in its beak a memory of Rossetti: one from the Blessed Damozel, the lady who leaned out of heaven with three lilies lying asleep along her bended arm—a gift for the Virgin. A better gift for the Virgin would have been a wreath of hawthorn, one that would have reminded her more intimately of the beauty of earth than the lilies. An oversight on the part of Rossetti. . . . But, no, there are no hawthorns in ruined Galilee, and as likely as not that is why everybody was so discontented with his life in Galilee and failed to understand that our life is beautiful because it is transitory, and that the joys of heaven

would weary us before we had heard sonatas for ten thousand years. But if there had been hawthorn in Galilee all might have been different, March in Galilee is May in England and had there been hawthorn in Galilee I should have noticed it at once.

And then, a little cross with myself for thinking of Galilee, a country that is responsible for more wasted time than any other, I said: The white, no doubt, is more beautiful than the pink, and yet the pink tree that has just fled past is extraordinarily beautiful. I remember it from last year, and in my memory it exhales a more subtle scent than perhaps the white. But am I sure that this preference is not a prejudice sprung from the fact that a large tree of pink grew in my garden when I lived in Upper Ely Place? And once again I fell to thinking of the hawthorns that had bloomed for me ten years ago in my garden. The blooms of yester year haunt us, I cried, and awaking suddenly I saw a country passing, beautiful as antiquity. And my thoughts turning to Thessaly I said: Thessaly is too hot in June. Its nymphs and fauns, and Silenus, should migrate here at the end of April and tempt the druids of Maynooth out of their chastity; and then, imagination taking the place of reason once again, I began to believe that a nymph would reveal herself to me if I were to keep my thoughts fixed on those dim sunny fields passing by, and sure enough I very soon espied one reclining in a drift of haze. Goddess or cloud, God knows which, I cried, and asked myself if I should allow the occasion to pass without stopping the train to inquire, for to let such an occasion pass without inquiry, I meditated, would be folly surely. But, alas, at the moment of starting to my feet to pull the cord of communication I foresaw the guard's face and the faces of many passengers agleam with various anger at the only worthy reason ever given by a passenger for the stopping of an express train—that he had been vouchsafed a

glimpse of a goddess in drifting haze. And almost as distinctly as the altercation between me and the guard, the scene in the police court appeared to me, with myself in the dock pleading justification for my action, saying, and saying well, if a man may not stop the Limited Mail to see goddesses in drifting haze, for what may he stop the train? a belief in goddesses being essential for the maintenance of the world. If that were so the world would have ended long ago, his Worship raps out. But your Worship saw a goddess in the haze. Never saw such a thing in my life, his Worship answers. But I thought that your Worship married beautiful Miss Lynch from Partry. At which remark a cloud gathers in his Worship's face, and he declares that I am wasting the time of the Court, but not before I succeed in interjecting: Your vision vanished like mine, and am I to understand that because yours endured a little longer than mine I am to be condemned to the cells while you go scot free? Forty shillings or a month, the magistrate cries, inwardly pleased but unable to escape from the toils of the law. And in such characteristic Irish fashion the adventure would have ended: forty shillings or a month! But forty shillings have often been wasted on things as unimportant as the stopping of a train to see a goddess. My thought melted into a dream of the subsequent assemblage of the passengers, many of whom have been prone to search the hedge-rows. Too late, too late, I cried; my goddess is now many hundred yards behind me . . . drunken up perchance by the sun. As if to console me, a poem arose out of my very legitimate despondency, and in it Pan, as he went down the Vale of Mænalus singing, pursues a maiden and discovers a flute in one of the reeds into which he can pour his grief; but Mænalus is not a more beautiful name than Avoca; Greece lacks our incomparable haze—the only fitting garment for a goddess if she be not wholly ungarmented.

Ah! if it were not for our incurable love of druids, Ireland would be teeming with nymphs and dryads. The last one was Etain, and we are told that the sweetness of her legs pierced one of our elder poets to the heart, and Mary whom we received in exchange has no legs, being a virgin, or if she had any, nobody saw them, not even her husband, so does a majority in this county aver, whereas the majority in the county I have come from says he did. An important question truly and one not less difficult to decide than the hawthorn.

CHAP. VI.

I SUPPOSE the climate is answerable for the virginity of our single goddess, I said to myself, and the words might have given rise to some pleasant fancies if my eyes had not caught sight of a man in gaiters following a path through a field in which a long herd stood up to their knees in buttercups: one of our immemorial herdsmen, I said, and some thought concerning him expressed in *Salve* came upon me suddenly, and for a long time I sat chewing the cud of it, that the Irish herdsman divined the steak in the bullock's rump with the same intuitive perception as the Greek did the statue in the marble. A truly admirable appreciation of one's own country and countrymen, and after having enjoyed it I cannot do else than lose myself in admiration of the man's measured gait, and approve his project, which doubtless was to change the pasture of his herds. And having chosen the field in which his cattle are to graze, I said, he will stand leaning over a gate till dinner-time, an unending exemplar of Ireland. He was in the beginning and ever shall be, world without end. A race, I continued, that does not change. As I was thinking these things an indolent priest was being driven swiftly along a pleasant road bending round a hill-side, and I added: He, too, is

an exemplar of the Irish race as it always was and always will be, world without end. And whither goes he? To a convent to shrive some helpless nuns, or is he on his way to Maynooth, where the meals are in accordance with long ecclesiastical usage; or to some rich farmer's house chosen by him for stations?

The priest to his nuns and I to my reveries in a train that jolts and hurtles along at a fine rate by the side of an old canal full of reeds and rushes. We passed a lock-house seemingly in ruins. MacCan, I said, believed in the revival of the waterways, but since his death the canals have fallen into idleness, which is a pity, for the life of the canal is in keeping with our unaccentuated climate. But the ruin of the canal is not complete, I cried; for yonder comes a horse urged forward by a sapling freshly torn from the hedge. In Ireland nothing disappears, all is that ever was; and pleased with the raciness of my thoughts, my eyes return to the landscape. England, I said, does not fade out of Ireland until we reach Mullingar, and after leaving Mullingar behind us we pass many spots almost undistinguishable from English scenery, for wherever the land rises out of bog rich fields begin and the trees emerge like vapours. But why should Corot come into the mind of one weary of spinnage and vapour?

A lonely country, sir. The words startled me, and I could only answer my fellow-traveller: yes, sir, a lonely country. But gathering from his face that he seemed to expect something more from me than a mere repetition of the words he used, I roused into some sort of mental activity. The cattle aren't lonely; they're always in company like the monks and the nuns, I said, for in Ireland the first thought in a railway carriage is—am I travelling with a Protestant or a Catholic? His smile told me he was a Protestant, and from his speech and appearance I began to guess a landlord's agent, a man

between fifty and sixty, tall and lean, reminding me of Don Quixote, and the Don's appearance is but the symbol of the Don's credulous soul; whosoever has been given the body has received the soul, or some part of it; and I was therefore grateful to hear before we reached Mullingar that he, too, had projects for the advancement of Ireland, all of which I had heard before, but which he seemed to exalt a little in the telling. And giving my ear to him I heard again the project for the establishment of factories for the compression of peat, which when compressed would yield as much heat as coal; with compressed fuel Ireland will become a great industrial nation, he said, and I answered that Ireland is so winning among her ruins that it would be a pity to reform her. She has rejected so many reformations that it would be a pity if she now—I was going to say if she put off her Catholic rags and appeared in clean Pauline linen; but a cloud seemed to gather in my fellow-traveller's face, and instead of continuing my native protestantism, with a deft turn of words I whisked the conversation back to economic difficulties and professed sympathy with the building of piers, the laying down of oyster beds and a tunnel under the sea uniting Scotland with Ireland. Portpatrick and Galway, I said, could be connected by a line of railway and the bay thereby turned into a great Transatlantic port. A big job, he said. True, quite true, I answered, but realisable in the end. It might, however, be better to begin by setting up a bacon factory in Castlebar. Every pig breeder, he said, could take a ten-pound share, and in Mayo, he continued, every cottager owns a pig. But can cottagers afford a ten-pound share? I interjected; and will you guarantee a minimum price for the pigs? and of all is the Mayo pig the kind of pig that produces the London rasher? My questions seemed to vex him, and we might not have spoken again during the journey had it not been for the rashers. It was their succulence that

prompted him to address me again on the advantage a bacon factory would be to Castlebar and to Mayo generally, and wishing to hear his views I assumed so pleasant an air of acquiescence that before long the bacon factory was lost sight of and we were talking of the great changes that had come over the country since we were young men. In former times, my traveller said, there was the big house, and the villagers always coming and going on some errand or another; the women coming up at midday with their husbands' and sons' dinners. A poor dinner, it is true, five or six potatoes tied up in a cloth, and a noggin of buttermilk which they would get from the dairy-maid. But in those days the people were contented with very little, they never tasted meat but once a year and that at Christmas time, which they boiled in a pot, the only knowledge of cooking they had. When the potatoes rotted in the famine years, the people were without anything, there never having been any factories for the making of cheese in Ireland. For some reason or another the Irish are not cheese eaters. The Welsh are, and work all day nourishing themselves from time to time with a bite of cheese and a sup of beer. And then the Welsh are dissenters and radicals, whereas the villagers here are Catholic and like the big house for the hum of life always going on: the smithy with its clanging anvil and snoring bellows; the carpenter's shop, its threshold heaped with shavings—Micky Murphy in the background making a door or a window sash, and more ready than the smith himself to pass the time of day with whosoever might have a moment to spare. And I mustn't forget the sawyers, one of them in the pit and the other above him, slicing a great balk for Micky Murphy, who needed timber for gates and door-posts. Always something going on, you see. And as likely as not some of the house servants have come up from the village: their fathers and mothers and their sisters and

brothers were all welcome. And then there was the landlord hanging about the stable-yard with a couple of setters at his heels, and he always willing to speak to the tenants on Saturdays, hearing all their complaints, and when they had no complaints, which very often happened, they came up just for the sake of a talk. You see with so many things going on the country was never lonely, but now all I am telling you about has passed away and the people are beginning to feel the loneliness of the country very sore upon them. But it was the tenants who wished to get rid of the landlords, I interjected. Yes, that is so, my friend replied, but you see the rents in former times were too high and they couldn't pay them. But they'd like to have their landlords back again, with smaller rents, mind you. Yes, they would and leppin'. They'd sooner be bringing up their notes as in old times to the big house than sending them to the Board, which is a harder task-master than ever Clanricarde was, and altogether without consideration of special cases and circumstances. The way it is now is that the tenant just pays and if he fails to pay he goes, eviction in Ireland being easier than ever it was, without police and sub-sheriff. For you see if the Bishops agree, and there are a dozen on the Board, that a man must be put out, out he is put, for there isn't a man in Ireland that would dare to raise his voice against a Bishop. Out he goes and there's an end of it. Well, all that is contrary to the spirit of the Irish people, who have no taste for offices and clerks and routine work, and who like to know with whom they are dealing, as they have always done, and as their fathers have done before them: a clannish people, sir, who have not yet forgotten the chieftain they have gone to battle for. As I was saying to you, sir, the people miss the hum of life that was always going on around the old country houses. In exchange they've got the land.

The news that Ireland, wrenched from the landlords with so much trouble, was passing into the hands of the clergy put the thought into my mind that a third of the land of England was Church property in Reformation times. It was, I said, the riches of the clergy that had set the people saying—the kingdom of heaven may be for us, but the kingdom of earth is for them. On that they began reading the Gospels, and it would be a wonderful thing surely if the avarice of the clergy turned the Irish into Protestants, the same as it did the English. Be this as it may, what Ireland needs is a new religion, and I pray that she may get one. Which? It matters not, but let her get one quickly, I muttered, and almost immediately after my traveller's voice awoke me from my reverie, and the truth became apparent that all the while I had been dreaming he had been telling a story.

It behoved me to reconstruct the first half from the beginning, for it was beyond my courage to say: What you told me about the passing away of the Irish land from the tenants to the clergy interested me so profoundly that I missed a good deal of the story you are telling: would you be kind enough to repeat it all over again? He might very well answer my request: If you didn't care to listen you must go without, and return to his paper, leaving me looking out of the window at the landscape regretting I had entered into conversation with him. All the same, I said, it was stupid of me to miss the beginning of his story; and it will be more stupid still if I do not give my ears at once to what he is telling about Joseph Appley.

CHAP. VII.

I'M sure I heard him say that Joseph Appley was from Wiltshire, my fellow-traveller repeated, and I tried to look as if the evidence pointed to Wiltshire. I have often

heard Sir Hugh say that he picked him up in Wiltshire. Joseph was a boy at the time, he said, and a boy is picked very much like a berry from a hedge, like a berry; I've often heard Sir Hugh say that he picked him from the hedge and that he became immediately after the best cab-boy in London. No matter what time Sir Hugh came out of a theatre his cab drove up, Joseph on the box ready to hop off it on the instant to open the door for Sir Hugh. I have heard Sir Hugh say that he couldn't understand by what process of thought Joseph divined his movements. He seems to know them instinctively, were Sir Hugh's very words to me.

But not having heard the beginning of the story I did not know who Sir Hugh was; an Irish landlord, I judged him to be by inference, but could not tell in what county till my fellow-traveller mentioned that Sir Hugh had won the Chester Cup with Tomboy, and the Cambridgeshire with Makebelieve. You must have heard of these horses, he said, and I answered that the names recalled a past time to me. A few moments after I remembered that Makebelieve had won the race carrying nine stone, which was considered in those days an extraordinary performance for a three-year-old. In those days, my fellow-traveller continued, Sir Hugh was coining money on the race-course. There was Chimney Sweep, another great horse of his, and Bayleaf was a fast mare, that won a great deal of money, and would have won a great deal more if she had been able to get the mile, but she always began to stop at the three-quarters. Joseph Appley was doing pretty well too, not a long way behind his master, not farther than a valet should be; a great pair surely in the old days, looked out for at the cock-pit, the prize-ring and the race-course. Sir Hugh thought the world and all of Joseph Appley, who began, as I have told you, as a cab-boy and afterwards became the best valet Sir Hugh ever had in his life. A little extravagant, Sir Hugh would

say, Joseph's maxim always being that the best was good enough for me. Nor was Joseph quite satisfied even with the best; he'd always tell the tradesman: Now if you do this extra well, I'll give you a little more. But, said my fellow-traveller, at the time I am telling of, a little extravagance more or less didn't matter; a few pounds one way or the other make no difference when you're winning big handicaps. But the day came when Sir Hugh's horses were not so fast as they used to be, and perhaps that was the reason he took to himself a wife; her fortune paid some of his debts and allowed him to run horses again, for at the time of his marriage he hadn't paid off his forfeits; he owed money to Weatherby; and after his marriage—well, there were politics, and in those days elections cost a lot of money; Sir Hugh's politics were not very popular, and he had to spend a great deal in making himself popular: the stud was expensive, and his lady wasn't content to live at Muchloon alone while her husband was away in England. She had people staying in the house all the time, and with Joseph running the house on the principle that the best of everything was good enough for Muchloon, it is easy to imagine the great hump of debt that began to rise up on Sir Hugh's shoulders. At last the day came. I'm going back to London, Appley, to economise. Joseph muttered (he always muttered a little) that he had never heard of anyone going to London to economise before. But wouldn't you like to come to London with me? he asked. Joseph said he was too old. But I should have thought that he would have liked to return to his own country, I interjected. My fellow-traveller rapped out that England was far behind Joseph by this time and Ireland as far as ever ahead of him, though he had married the lady's maid, a Catholic, who, of course, couldn't marry him unless he promised to bring up his children Catholics, which he did; and when the family left him alone in charge of Muchloon he made the last

effort to become an Irishman that an Englishman can make: he became a Catholic; but this change didn't alter matters, for I think he was more English after the change than before it.

What sort of woman was his wife? I asked for Joseph's unfortunate life began to interest me. A long, melancholy woman, my fellow-traveller answered, and her daughter as lank and melancholy as herself. The son was a bit podgy like his father—well-meaning but good-for-nothing. I think Joseph was always ashamed of his family, the females especially: for I remember it always seemed to irritate him if his wife and daughter were met on the kitchen stairs on their way to the pantry. A pair of long-faced, cringing women were the two of them; and the wife couldn't have been different from the daughter; yet Joseph was mad to get her. A strange infatuation that refusals couldn't cool. Propinquity I suppose it was, she being the lady's maid at Ardath and Sir Hugh always going to Ardath—— Master after mistress and valet after maid, I jerked in. Something like that, my travelling companion answered. I don't want to revive old scandals, but there was a story going that one of the ladies there loved Sir Hugh in his bachelor days, and this I know for certain, that she was the only untitled lady at the great dinner he gave after winning the Cambridgeshire. A curious piece of evidence to adduce, and altogether insufficient it seemed to me to be; I should have liked to put a few questions, but withheld them, afraid to lose the tale of Joseph Appley's misfortunes.

Well, one of his misfortunes was this: you see when Sir Hugh died, the heir was a minor and wanted money to spend on his pleasure in London, and to get this money he applied to Joseph, who negotiated a loan from one of the tenants, and when her ladyship heard that Joseph had done this, she sent him packing into the village, and

Joseph in an Irish village was a sad spectacle. Everybody liked Joseph, but an alien he was, never was there such an alien before as Joseph, and to this day I'm wondering how he endured the two years he spent in the village, and he was fully two years in Ballyholly before the heir, who was then the owner of Muchloon, restored him to his pantry. It was pleasant to see him back in it; he put him back into his pantry, paid him his wages, and these were spent on the farm, which was a failure, for his two sons were, as I have said, helpless boys, wastrels I suppose you'd call them. Some sort of misfortune was always falling upon them, and it was always some new misfortune they had to tell. The Irish are very fond of sad stories, and the Appleys could tell how the mare and foal had died on them, but they always forgot to tell they were leaving their old father to starve in the great Georgian mansion. Poor boys, they were starving themselves; and it was fortunate that I went there one day else Joseph might have died of hunger. What's the matter, Joseph? says I. You're looking thin and pale. I'm starving, sir, was all he answered. What could I do but put my hand into my pocket and give him five pounds? But, on looking closer, his face told me he needed food at once, and remembering I had brought some luncheon with me I sent down to the stables for it and shared it with him in his pantry, on the table on which he used to brush his old master's clothes and clean his boots. He wanted to open up the dining-room, but I wouldn't let him. We'll just have a snack together, said I, and a talk about the horses and the spring handicaps. Have you seen the weights for the City and Suburban? Joseph said he hadn't seen a newspaper for a long time, and I took one out of my pocket, a copy of *The Sportsman,* a paper he knew nothing about. Joseph's paper was *Bell's Life.* If I came into the pantry unexpectedly he'd put the paper into his press, into his

wonderful press, out of which everything seemed to come. You couldn't ask Joseph for anything he couldn't produce from that press. His press was a great wonder to me when I was a boy; I used to try to peep over his shoulder when he opened it. But Joseph was careful never to allow anybody to look into his press. He'd just give what he was asked for and lock the press abruptly. But one day I espied a packet of newspapers, not one packet but many, and all tied up with string very carefully. So you keep the file, Joseph, if not all of it of the time when you and Sir Hugh were about together and when you very nearly challenged the Game Chicken to a fight you not knowing who he was? You see I remember everything you tell me. Even Joseph could be flattered, but it required a little pressure to get him to admit that he had a complete *Bell's Life;* why he kept it God knows. I've often imagined him reading the prize-fights and the race-meetings and the cock-fights all over again in the long evenings at Muchloon. I supposed that was it, but he never told me that was why he kept them, the most secretive little man ever known: you might tell him anything and be sure that he would not repeat it.

A little man? I said. I imagined him as a tall, lean hungry man. You got that idea, my fellow-traveller replied, from what I told you of his wife: a tall, melancholy woman. No, he married the very opposite to himself. Joseph was a short-necked, full-bodied, white-faced little man, rotund in later life. Don't I remember, my fellow-traveller continued, the short fleshy nose and his running walk? And did he live all alone in Muchloon? Did all the servants go away with Sir Hugh to London? I asked. Not all, my fellow-traveller answered. The old cook and housemaid remained with him, but they were very old and died a few years afterwards, blessing the master because he left them on board wages. Servants

were very grateful in former times and thought a great deal was being done for them if they were not left to starve. And there were no complaints about the dinners they were given, nor the rooms they were put to sleep in. The servants always slept in large roomy subterranean dwellings in Muchloon, at the end of the kitchen passage; the eighteenth century in Ireland, and perhaps elsewhere, did not look after their servants as well as the nineteenth.

Is Joseph still alive? I asked, for my imagination was now filled with the personality of the old servant, whom I could see in my mind's eye taking the air on the weed-grown terrace, and in my mind's ear was the peacock, the last of a hundred, uttering doleful cries from the branches of a great cedar. No, said my companion, Joseph is dead; he died in his pantry five years ago. I saw him three weeks before his death; he was then eighty but still thinking of the autumn handicaps, and as he fancied a horse for the Cesarewitch I said: Joseph, I'll put you on ten shillings. The horse won, but Joseph was not here to receive it. I'm sorry, for I'd have liked him to have won his last bet, I said. It didn't matter. The ten shillings that I put him on at twenty-five to one illuminated the last day of his life, and perhaps he died seeing in a vision his horse passing first beyond the post. An honest death-bed vision that would be. A man's death should be part and parcel of his life. So Joseph died English to the last? Yes, my companion answered, Ireland failed to assimilate him, and then, anxious to make amends at the end of the story for my inattention at the beginning, I asked for news of Joseph's sons, and learned that they had sold their interest in the farm and purchased some cars and horses. They were now car-drivers in Athenry, and Muchloon stands empty on its green hill-top, the present owner not being rich enough to live there. The most he can do, continued my fellow-

traveller, is to keep a caretaker in the house. When he goes the next man will sell the lead off the roof, and Muchloon will be added to the ruins of all sorts that encumber Ireland. The finest assortment of ruins the world can show. From the fifth century onwards every century is represented; English and Irish ruins, ruined houses and ruined lives.

At the next station I was bidden good-bye, and lay back in my seat with a very vivid impression in my heart of a man that lived in the world unhappily.

CHAP. VIII.

ATHLONE was the destination of my travelling companions, and when they were gone I had the carriage to myself, but only for a few minutes. Just before starting a man entered, and he came in so quietly that I did not raise my eyes but continued my meditations. Neither cough nor sneeze nor shuffle of feet nor rustle of newspaper nor match was struck to disturb me: it was the silence that awakened me from my dream of the old English servant who had always remained a stranger, an alien in the country whither chance had carried him.

My new travelling companion was a frail old man of seventy: A priest, I said, grown old in his craft, and I began to scrutinise his face, reading in it only obedience to rule: like one asleep in his instinct, I added; and asked myself if he were ordered by his Church to commit some act that raised his conscience in revolt would he accept his conscience as his guide or would he place his Church above his conscience? The answer my reason returned to this question was that the Dilemma I had formulated could not arise, for it was plain from the man's face that he had long ago accepted the Church as his conscience. He sat at the further end of the railway carriage, his face bent upon his breviary and almost

hidden in the shadow of a large-brimmed hat. It was this partial view of his face, a silhouette in which little appeared but a long, finely cut nose, that reminded me of a face I had seen many years ago; and in the shadow of a hat, I said. I never knew more of the face that I am trying to remember, only the pointed oval and the long, finely cut nose. The eyes I never saw, they were always averted from me, just as the priest's eyes are now. If it should be the same priest! The word 'priest' stirred my memory, and of a sudden it became certain that the old man reading his breviary at the further end of the railway carriage was none other than Cunningham's spiritual director; the priest who used to wait on Cunningham's doorstep when I lived in Upper Ely Place—a tiny *cul de sac*—five little eighteenth-century houses built on a sort of terrace overlooking a garden, a square, about a rood of ground belonging to No. 4, the house I lived in. A quiet little old-world spot shut off from the grand houses of Ely Place by tall iron gates; marked off, I should have said, for the gates were always open, and the rare sight-seer led by chance into this forgotten corner of the city must have often wondered why the gates were ever put there, for what purpose—to defend Ely Place against the robbers that used to descend from the Dublin mountains to raid the city as late as the eighteenth century? The sight-seer's fancy may have wandered into this explanation of the gates and out of it into another equally absurd, but it could not have occurred to anybody in the twentieth century that the gates were merely ornamental, designed with no other view than beauty; he may, however, have failed to notice that they added to the seclusion, and were never shut for the reason that it were vain to shut gates on a forgotten corner.

Often from my windows have I watched the vagrant sight-seer pace the little pavement the length of my

garden and seen him stop perplexed by the old-world beauty of the place, by the little alley of lilac bushes, the laburnums, hawthorns and the great apple-trees; the flower walk filled with old-fashioned flowers, and the pump by the elder bush under the fig-trees could not fail to stir even the most sluggish imagination. Myself, too, pacing the sward, my hands behind my back composing, or idly at work in the flower beds on either side of the gravel walk, or listening to the sparrows quarrelling in the hawthorns or flying from the bees that often pursued me, or thinking of my neighbours whilst sitting under the great apple-tree, must have added to the romance.

At No. 5, a household of elderly women with a boy destined for the Church, already morose. At No. 4, myself. At No. 3, Cunningham, the man whose story I am about to relate; at No. 2, a couple of noisy girls with a taste for brogue, dogs, bicycles and whistling. At No. 1, a celebrated lawyer of retiring presence, without a story, if that be possible. We all no doubt have stories, and death is a tragedy which finds its way into every life sooner or later, slowly or swiftly, and I know of no more moving tragedy than the death of my next-door neighbour, whom I often guessed to be a retired tradesman, without however being able to fit him into any trade. He would not do for a grocer—grocers are men of serious mien, and Cunningham, to put it bluntly, was a comic little fellow, suited to the music hall stage, one whose turn could be relied upon to revive the drooping spirits of an audience after a sentimental song with harp accompaniment. A butt of a man, as we say in Ireland; thick-set, with a large head and a rolling gait of a dwarf when he fared forth after his dinner about three o'clock, always dressed the same, in a yellow overcoat and wide grey trousers, a corpulent cigar always in his mouth and a white flower in his button-hole, a jolly little fellow to the casual observer, but to me, who saw him every day, his

humour seemed superficial and to overlie a deep-set melancholy—the melancholy of the dwarf, somebody once said, and the words put a thought of Velasquez's dwarfs into my mind. In earlier centuries he would have drifted into the palace, but how did he escape the music hall, I often murmured, and set to snail hunting while considering the little man whose life was as strange as his appearance, for he seemed to be without any friends, nobody ever crossed his threshold except his servant, an old woman who always bade me the hour of the day; and it was from her I learnt that when Cunningham went forth in the afternoon he would not return until seven in the evening: And all that while he'll be walking round Phœnix Park, she said, talking to the many people he meets with on the way, for the master is well known to everybody in the city of Dublin. But he never asks anybody to his house, I said. No, she answered; no one comes here. But he's well known and respected in the city of Dublin.

When we passed each other in the street he always averted his eyes, and if I had been polite I should have imitated him, but I could not keep myself from looking into his comical eyes turned up at the corners, and wondering at the great roll of flesh from ear to ear, and at the chins descending step by step into his bosom. But my knowledge of Cunningham did not exceed the facts observed by myself and related by his housekeeper: till one day, some months later, I was kept waiting at Sir Thornley Stoker's, my presence causing the doctor some embarrassment, for there was some shutting of doors and a hurried exit through the hall that set me wondering who the man or woman could be that Sir Thornley Stoker did not wish me to see. The faint surprise this caused was increased by the doctor's hilarity when I was admitted into his study. He lay back in his Chippendale arm-chair overcome by some uncontrollable mirth. At

last in reply to my demands of an explanation he blurted out: You've just missed seeing Cunningham. I asked him to stay to meet you but at the moment your name was mentioned he snatched up his hat. It's a pity you don't know Cunningham. Cunningham is Dublin in essence. You see, read and understand Dublin in Cunningham. An epitome, an abridgment, a compendium of Dublin. But why won't he know me? The doctor seemed unwilling to answer my question, and this roused my curiosity to hear the reason, but I soon began to perceive that the doctor did not know exactly the reason of Cunningham's aversion. Very likely because we're next-door neighbours, I said. There may be something of that in it, the doctor answered, and all the while his lips trembled with laughter. At last he could control his hilarity no longer, and I watched him roll over in his wonderful Chippendale chair. Now what is it? I asked, and he began to tell me that Cunningham was possessed of all the drollery of the world and could control any meeting, do what he liked with it, and then the doctor began to repeat himself, telling me that Cunningham knew everybody and was always overflowing with comicality, and seized by a sudden memory the doctor exploded with laughter. If you had only heard him just now telling—— But do tell me. I can't tell you. It's the Dublin accent and the Dublin idiom. It was all about *Evelyn Innes*. You don't know what you've missed, and he turned over in his chair to laugh again. No, there's no use my trying to tell it; you should hear Cunningham. But I can't hear Cunningham; he won't know me. At last, apologising for spoiling the story, Sir Thornley told me that I must take for granted the racy description of two workmen who had come to Upper Ely Place to mend the drains in front of my house. After having dug a hole, they took a seat at either end, and sat spitting into it from time to time in solemn silence, until at last one said to

the other: Do you know the fellow that lives in the house forninst us? You don't? Well, I'll tell you who he is; he's the fellow that wrote *Evelyn Innes*. And who was she? She was a great opera singer. And the story is all about the ould hat. She was lying on a crimson sofa with mother-of-pearl legs when the baronet came into the room, his eyes jumping out of his head and he as hot as be damned. Without as much as a good-morrow, he jumped down on his knees alongside of her, and the next chapter's in Italy.

The crimson sofa, I said, with the mother-of-pearl legs, and the baronet 'as hot as be damned' would be about as much of the story as a Dublin workman would be likely to gather from the book. But if you had heard himself tell it, the doctor chortled. He always speaks of you as 'George,' the doctor added, and he again became speechless. Thomson, he said at last, knows Cunningham better than I; he pulled him through a long and serious illness when he was landlord of the Blue Anchor in Abbey Street. So he's a retired publican, I answered. I always saw a retired tradesman in him but—— But what? the doctor said. Only this, that he reminded me more often of the chairman in a music hall; he can troll out a song, I hear him sometimes of a Sunday morning through the wall; and behind the bar he would be as popular as in front of the footlights. A dangerous trade his for an Irishman, the doctor said, for the host must drink with his customers, a sort of assurance that the quality of the whisky is all right. So he's a retired publican, I continued. And a very successful publican, Stoker interjected. He brought seventeen thousand pounds out of the business. But Thomson will tell you more about him than I can.

Sir William Thomson was Sir Thornley Stoker's brother-in-law, and on my next visit to 54 Stephen's Green I heard that there was nobody like Cunningham to

raise a laugh against the clergy. Our clergy? I said. His own clergy, Thomson answered, and he recalled some of Cunningham's sallies. But if he knows Catholicism to be so unworthy, how is it that he has not discovered himself to be a Protestant? Ah! Sir William answered, you ask that question because you haven't yet learnt to understand Ireland. Cunningham was sent to confession when he was seven years of age, and his confessor so kneaded hell into his mind that neither drink nor women could enable him to forget it afterwards. There's too much punishment in our theology, and it is even more prominent in Catholic religious education, for the Catholics have purgatory. I don't know where they get it from, but purgatory is the boy that robs the widow and the orphan for them, and purgatory and hell work together in Catholic picture books and prayers—red-hot devils stoking the fire, lakes of boiling pitch, and with the excellent result, from the priest's point of view, that the Catholic mind is paralysed. With the front of his mind Cunningham sees that his clergy think more of possessing themselves of the property of their parishioners than of anything else; that they haunt death-beds and despoil widows and orphans without mercy. Every month a will in which a man leaves all his money for masses for the repose of his soul is contested in the Law Courts. Cunningham knows all this; he's a shrewd man, he would not have brought seventeen thousand pounds out of the Blue Anchor if he hadn't been a shrewd man, but at the back of his mind there is fear of hell and purgatory. The doctor stopped speaking, his face becoming grave and thoughtful. A moment after he broke into a smile. To appreciate Cunningham, he said, you must hear him talk; a spring of natural humour which you say you have never met with in Ireland and which you deny exists. I'd like you to meet Cunningham, but he's afraid of you, I think. But why, I asked, should he be afraid of me?

He's a little queer, but nothing serious, the doctor answered.

A little later Thomson returned to Cunningham's humour and tried to explain it, telling that it flowed along like a brook, as spontaneous and as natural, rising up out of himself without artifice. Yes, I think I understand; with the smack of spring water on it, I answered, and the doctor told of Cunningham's power over an audience; how he captivated it and held it by the raciness of his wit. I should like you to meet him, he repeated. But if he won't meet me there's no help for it, I answered. And bidding the doctor good-bye I returned home, remembering more distinctly than anything else what the doctor had said about Cunningham's fear of hell. Yes, I said to myself, that is the characteristic of Ireland, fear of hell, and I fell to thinking of the Irish publican, saying to myself, his seventeen thousand pounds may develop easily into scruples of conscience, I wonder!

CHAP. IX.

THE days melted into weeks, as their wont is, and the weeks accumulated, and from my doorstep this year as last year I saw Cunningham start forth every afternoon, rolling down the pavement as one of Velasquez's dwarfs might, a white flower in his button-hole, a corpulent cigar in his mouth. He returned after having accomplished several miles to a lonely dinner and a long evening by himself. Sometimes, I said, he has the old woman up in the drawing-room and chats with her. And little by little the desire to discover a theme in which Cunningham would display himself began to fidget me, and when the sanitary inspector condemned my drains I sent his report to Cunningham, who returned the report just as if he were able to see into my mind and had read there that

I could not do else than look upon him as a type. If we met in the street coming from different directions he avoided my look, and he never stopped to gaze into my pretty garden, and there were times when my garden was a very pretty one, especially in early spring when the apple-trees were in bloom, and later the hawthorns, and afterwards in late summer, when the sweet-pea was in flower. But he never looked at my flowers, and nobody ever came to see him, until one day I saw the grey stony face of the priest sitting opposite to me in the train on Cunningham's doorstep, and fell to wondering what his errand might be. A few days after I caught sight of the priest again, and henceforth not many days passed without my seeing him; every week he appeared on the doorstep, and the stony face put thoughts into my mind of the terrors it was the duty of the priest to foster: however much he might deprecate as a man the despoiling of widows and orphans he must not impugn the advantage it is to the sinner to leave money for masses for the salvation of his soul.

The priest's face never changed expression, nor did he look up at me; and though I often passed by him and strove to attract his eyes, they remained fixed on the doorstep whilst he waited for the servant to open the door for him. And the grey, stony face of the priest on the doorstep pursued me during my walks, setting me thinking on the drama in progress, only a wall, I said, separating me from it: a poor little man of unbalanced mind rapidly losing his wits at the thought of the almost endless ages he will have to spend in purgatory, expiating the sins of his youth, unless he leaves the money he acquired in the Blue Anchor to the Church for masses for the repose of his soul. Sad alternatives: to despoil one's relations or remain in purgatory, and in imagination I could see the twain sitting opposite each other; a look

of horror on the publican's face, the priest's grey and immovable.

CHAP. X.

ONE day as I came down to breakfast I heard a woman talking to my servants and there was from time to time a great wail of grief in her voice, and in grave apprehension I asked myself: What strange and doleful story can she be telling, and my heart beat faster as I descended the kitchen stairs. What is this, what is this? I cried, and a moment after I recognised in our visitor the woman who looked after poor Cunningham.

Oh, sir, she exclaimed; O Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the master is after hanging himself this morning out of the banisters, and she continued her story, sobbing and wailing from time to time, and by degrees I learnt that on not finding him in his bedroom when she took up his cup of tea in the morning, she waited, expecting that he was in the closet, but as he did not return, and not hearing him about she began to be alarmed and started looking for him, and it was from the banisters of the top storey that she found him hanging. You don't sleep in the top storey? No, sir, I sleep in the basement. Was he dead when you found him? Maybe he wasn't; he must have gone up the stairs to hang himself only a minute or so before I brought him up his tea. And he was dead before you could get a knife to cut him down? There was a knife on the tray, sir; but I didn't like to cut him down for fear that he would hurt himself in the fall, and I ran out without my cap or anything to fetch the police. But for what reason did he hang himself? I asked. He wasn't in want of money? No, sir, that wasn't it. He left the money a while back to the Church for masses to be said for his soul. But you see, sir, the priest used to be telling him that he couldn't keep himself

from the drink. Maybe you saw the priest standing on our doorstep, sir? Yes, yes, I answered. The poor master often fancied himself a bit queer in his mind, though, indeed, he was not, sir. He was not, indeed; he was as sane as you or I. It was easy to twist him so that he'd go out of his wits, and he afraid that he might lose the wits when there wasn't a priest next or near him to hear his confession; it was that was troubling his mind. And that's what they would be talking about upstairs, the priest urging him to go into John-o'-God's and be looked after there. John-o'-God's, I repeated; what a strange name. Yes, sir, but you must know it, the asylum up in the woods by the Scalp. And it was fear of going there that drove him to the hanging, I'm sure of that. For only the night before, when I was sitting in the drawing-room with him, he said to me: They'll never get me as long as I have this hand, and they'll never get me there.

It was at that moment that the front door bell rang. My secretary, I said. She came down to the kitchen and heard the story over again from the old woman, and going upstairs together she said to me: I saw Mr. Cunningham last night returning home, carrying something under his coat, and his face frightened me. He must have been planning it then. Carrying something under his coat? Yes, one end of it was showing; a rope it seemed to me to be. No, it wasn't a rope, a strap, I said. He must have gone down to buy it and returned home as you were leaving, about seven o'clock. Afraid of John-o'-God's he hanged himself—only in John-o'-God's could he escape from temptation, and only there could he be sure of having a priest to shrive him at the last moment, and only in death could he escape John-o'-God's. And once in John-o'-God's he could not unmake his will. It's neat, I said, and the girl's eyes returned to me as we stood looking at each other.

A moment after my eyes returned to the priest sitting in the railway carriage, to the thin, refined face in which there was neither cruelty nor kindness, only an impersonal will, the will of the tooth in the cog wheel of the machine, no more than that; and I watched it till pity of Cunningham turned to pity of the priest and a dream began to unwind of the intimate horror that possesses a man when he begins to realise that he is no better than a priest.

The train was stopping and the priest left the train at Castlebar to continue his ministrations where and how I have no knowledge.

CHAP. XI.

NO passenger for Westport entered the carriage at Castlebar to distract my thoughts from Cunningham's last days, and for some time, how long I cannot say, I was considering how the idea of hanging himself had grown in his mind, taking possession of it till nothing else seemed real, or true, or worth thinking about. At times, I said, he must have been attracted by the idea of escape, as a hunted animal might be, and there must have been other times when he remembered that to take one's life is a mortal sin for which there is punishment. Yet despite all the descriptions of hell that his mind had been terrorised with, the fear of John-o'-God's was greater. But how can one know what passed in that failing brain? He must have suffered vaguely and intensely, as a lost dog suffers who knows not whither his master has gone or if he will ever return, or like the bee that has gotten into this carriage and strives to escape through the sunlit pane. A poor bumble bee, a silly insect compared with the bees that used to work in my garden forming combs with such economy of space that the mathematician is obliged to say it could not be done better. But the silly bumble bee merely makes a round hole, and therefore is

not able to lay up sufficient store of honey for the winter. My knowledge of bee life here ended, and my thoughts went to the poor bumble anxious to escape from the train. It has been carried long past its hive, I said, if the bumbles have hives, and will not find its way back. It will wander among the furze of yon hill and die at the season's close, but that is better than to be slashed down by the porter's towel at Westport; and forthright I began a chase of the bee, handkerchief in hand, catching the insect at last and throwing it from the window. A moment after it seemed to be back again, or another bee had come in, and overcoming some reluctance to continue the chase, I began it again and the insect was put out to seek sufficient honey for its life among the low rocky hills; if it could not gather honey, to die as bees die, very much as we do, I said, and in the enjoyment of my satisfied conscience fell to wondering at the natural pity that had compelled me to risk being stung for so faint a result as the prolongation of a bee's life—a week at most, I said, in some fragile bloom. By some odd connection of ideas the bee recalled to my mind a nun that I had not dared to set free, and to help the time away I summoned the circumstances of the happy sunny morning that I started from Paris to meet a lady who was coming from Etretat. We were to spend the day together at Rouen; and, being an adept in the mystery of time-tables, she had informed me of the departure of a certain train from the Gare St. Lazare which would arrive at Rouen at a few minutes past midday and she hoped to find me waiting for her on the platform.

It had been arranged that we were to breakfast together and visit the Cathedral afterwards, and to this happiness I had been looking forward, and not less eagerly to the hours between the Cathedral and dinner: for our courtship had lasted a long while, delayed by the lady's sense of sin and its consequences, but of late it had

seemed to me that her sense of sin had weakened, and so seriously that there was no saying what might not befall her between Cathedral and dinner unless clerestory, nave, aisle or ambulatory should cast her back again into past and present perplexities of conscience. And with the danger of the Cathedral well in my mind, which could not be avoided, but would have to be faced, I repaired to the railway station and waited in a dusty station, enlivened only by the cackling of peasant women and several crates of ducks and geese. The fowls, being packed too tightly for comfort, cackled in terrified accents, thrusting their heads forth, withdrawing them quickly to avoid the caresses of a small boy; and the same pity that had compelled me to release the bee afflicted me again. I should have liked to have given the fowls their freedom, but this was impossible, and I walked perturbed and wearied by the monotonous cackle of peasant women and fowls, till at last a nun lifted her eyes to mine as she passed me by: a strange glance of inquiry it was, a look that I could not do else than to interpret as the appeal of one human being to another for help. That her look was one of appeal I am certain now, after many years, but in the railway station it was different. I remembered as I walked back and forth that I had heard of prostitutes disguising themselves as nuns, but I did not believe the nun who had raised her eyes to mine was a prostitute. If I had, her image would have worn away like the image on a coin, whereas her image is as clear in my mind as the image on a coin just come from the mint; a long thin pointed oval face, well-shapen grey eyes illuminating a white formal pallor, a long thin nose and a small chin; a plain woman it is true, but her plainness was an interesting plainness. The habit she wore was black, without white forehead band; and I remember the well-wrought cross hanging on her breast; she was a young woman who might be twenty, and was

not more certainly than twenty-three or four. She passed without loitering, her eyes inviting speech, with a view, I said, to obtaining my help. It cannot be else. But I shall know for certain the next time she passes, and when we crossed each other again as before her eyes threw out the same inquiry.

There were only a few peasant women in the railway station when I arrived. She must have come in a few minutes after me, I said, and if she looks again I'll speak, and, on a resolve to offer help to the nun if she should ask for help, my eyes went to the clock: the hands pointed to three minutes to twelve and I said: If my lady were to find me engaged in conversation with a nun, my chances of getting her will be prejudiced maybe.

The nun passed out of the station, and I hesitated whether I should follow her. She can't deceive me, I said; half-a-dozen words and I shall know all about her. Moreover, it isn't likely that a Rouenaise would rely on such a romantic deception *pour faire un homme,* an expression that Balzac appreciates as *le sublime argot des filles.* Moreover, were she a punk she would not come to an empty railway station to ply her trade; and if she did she'd wait for the express train from Etretat to come in. It may be that I did not think quite so clearly at the time as I am thinking now, but I'm certain the woman wasn't a punk disguised as a nun. The moment was an anxious one, so anxious that I remember the wide rough open thoroughfare rising slightly, with trees on either side, and at the head of the road the bridge which she crossed on her way back to the convent—she left it after long resistance, for she could not believe else than that the impulse compelling her to return to life was but a temptation of the devil. She looked back once and the moment remains on my mind in as clear outline as the face of the nun.

The instinct of life, I said, at last broke the chains of

prejudice and convention, the door stood invitingly open; she passed out; her courage carried her to the railway, and what is more likely than that in her soul crisis she forgot she had no money for her journey. Nuns have no money! At sight of me hope blossomed again in her heart. I looked like one who would sympathise, who would understand, and who could lend her the sum of money she needed. She would have said: As soon as I reach home my relations, my friends, will return you the money you so kindly lent me, and my answer would have been: A letter from you telling me how you fare will be preferable. The debt, if you will let it remain one, will be a gift inestimable. These words we might have exchanged in a few minutes before the train arrived from Etretat; they would have been treasured like jewels and would have cheered me when myself seemed to myself no more than a shameful incident in the stream of life. The words we would have exchanged would have helped me to remember that I was worth at least one good action, but the good action drifted by me as the saving plank drifts by a swimmer. Nor is it too much to say that her words would have brightened my death-bed. But I missed my adventure, remaining hypnotised by an imaginary fear: my lady would have loved me better for my action when she heard the story, and it would have rendered her immune from the influence of the Cathedral. But why think of her, she is no part of the story that filled my heart to overflowing on the way to Westport.

Her chance gone by for ever, I said, she will return to her convent to weep till her heart becomes dry; the piercing will at first seem unendurable, but it will die down till she feels nothing of the old desire, no faintest echo of it, and she 'll be glad and believe the peace she is enjoying comes from God, unsuspicious that it is

the absorption of the individual will in the will of the community.

CHAP. XII.

WE were now within three miles of Westport, its hills unveiling crest after crest to eyes that rejoice in outline. How is it, I asked myself, that we can always tell if an artist has drawn a hill badly?—a hill may be of any shape, yet we can say always if a hill in a picture is well drawn. It would not be true to say that the Dublin mountains are ill drawn, though they are as shapeless as pillows and bolsters, in a bad light, and no better than waves in a good. Now if Monet had drawn them—— But would he draw what was not laid out for drawing? As there is a great deal in nature that is not laid out for drawing, the first business of the artist is to select; a head, badly placed in the canvas and badly lighted, demands all the skill of a great artist, and even he may not be able to do what Nature has set her face against his doing. We must not, I continued, enter into competition with nature, and all the lack-lustre pictures painted in the eighties rose up before my eyes: the strips of grey sky and the sage-green foregrounds we used to admire. We used to admire Watts, who entered into competition with Titian; but all competition is to be deplored, I cried out, somewhere between Castlebar and Westport, æsthetic reverie after æsthetic reverie helping the time away till a beautiful bridge came in sight of ten or a dozen tall arches spanning a deep valley, the tallest arch rising to at least a hundred feet.

The straight parapet reminded me of Waterloo Bridge. Waterloo Bridge passes into slums, I said, but on the thither side this bridge is engulfed in woods—an admirable bridge, a delightful contribution to a beautiful town, declining, it is true, but are not all neighbourhoods

declining? Piccadilly is now a mart consisting principally of tobacco and jewellery shops, interspersed with clubs—the clubs were once the dwellings of the aristocracy of England—Lord Palmerston's house only ceased to be his house in my boyhood; and for long afterwards Piccadilly was a great residential quarter. Park Lane, once so dandy, has fallen into a vulgar thoroughfare through which many hundreds of 'buses pass daily. And if we cross the Channel we find the same decadence. The Champs Élysées is a mere show of motor cars, and the Place Vendôme a market for picture bonnets, gowns and jewellery. And let us not think of the great Palais Royal and who lived there, lest we burst into tears at the thought of its ruins. And our café, the Nouvelle Athènes, has become the haunt of panders and punks. As all the world declines visibly it would be vain to expect Westport to be exempt from the general declension. But this may be said: Westport declines beautifully; abandoned mills may be a sad spectacle in the eyes of the merchant, but in the artist's eyes these warehouses rise up 'like palaces in the dusk,' and no ugly one, though the sun be shining and an east wind blowing, for saplings have grown up and birds have discovered a paradise amid the ruins.

A river, spanned in the principal street by stone bridges, flows through Westport, and the stream is lined with noble elms, with seats between the trees for the vagrant, and some beautiful houses for his regalement. The bank was once the house to which the Dowager Lady Sligo was wont to retire on the marriage of her son, and to this day it is known as the Dower House. Her journey, no doubt accomplished in a coach and four, was not a long one, for the gates of the domain faced the little river that proceeds through the domain out into the sea. It is sad that the beautiful house, with as noble a sweep of staircase as any in Merrion Square, should have been

turned into a prosaic bank, and we seek consolation and find it in the domain wall, a great piece of feudal masonry that ascends hills and drops into valleys mile after mile.

Westport strikes off to the right and left sporadically, with here and there a house, telling that in former times Westport had some culture; a quiet life of sedate embroideries no doubt flourished behind finely proportioned windows of which only a few remain. About four beautiful houses remain, I said, and the car turned up a street that put the eighteenth century clean out of my mind: Here at least, I said, there can have been no declension, for what I see is Ireland in essence—broken pavements with a desolating tide of children pouring over the thresholds of almost underground dwellings. And the street ends characteristically, I added, in some shards and splinters of cottages. We passed some school buildings where a pastor was engaged in admonishing the little flock before the lambs returned to the yoes for dinner, and the sight of him reminded me of another pastor, a few hundred yards away, in the street leading up the hill to the rectory. He, too, is anxious, I said, that there shall be no strayings; that the flock shall depart in good order and keep to the straight road. And this opposition of Catholics and Protestants puts into my mind thoughts of Stevenson in the Cevennes and the aphorism that he so often heard on the lips of the mountaineers—it is a bad thing for a man to change. And so convinced is he of the truth of this aphorism that he repeats it in his narrative two or three times, saying that a man's religion is the poetry of the man's experience, the philosophy of the history of his life, and that a man may not vary from his faith unless he can eradicate all memory of the past, and in a strict and not conventional meaning change his mind. The glitter of the words and the sentimentality captivate the reader till he lays aside the book and begins to remember that the Cevennians were Catholics

before they were Protestants, and that before they were Catholics they were heathen—facts that disturb his enjoyment of Stevenson's style, for it would seem impossible to admire words, however prettily they may flourish, if they put forth an untruth.

In his pursuit of style Stevenson seems to have forgotten that for the enjoyment of the religious stagnation he recommends we must wait for the next world; it has never existed in this and would seem to be contrary to the conditions of our mortal life. 'We cannot bathe twice in the same river,' a philosopher said long ago, and his disciples added afterwards: 'we cannot bathe once in the same river.' Scotsmen are almost proverbially metaphysical, but a great man is an exception in his own country; were it not so Stevenson could not have failed to perceive that Protestantism and Catholicism are states of soul, the possessions of mankind rather than of any particular race or family, rising up in the same country and in the same family spontaneously and without apparent cause. Peter was a Catholic and Paul was a Protestant, and a thousand years before Peter and Paul were born there were Protestants and Catholics. So in the strict sense there is no conversion; we merely discover in our hearts what we brought into the world with us, a disposition leading us to pious practices or an inly sense of divinity.

A striking illustration of a man becoming possessed of a sudden sense of divinity is given by Stevenson in the very pages that I am criticising. Stevenson had cast his camp under some chestnut-trees where he had slept ill, the ground being full of ants; and there being no water in the garden he made his toilet in the waters of the tarn before continuing his journey through a valley, overtaking an old man, who walked beside him talking about the morning and the valley. Connaissez vous le Seigneur? the old man asked. And as if averse from giving

a direct answer Stevenson asked him what Seigneur. The peasant only repeated the question and Stevenson answered: Now I understand you. Yes, I know him. He is the best of acquaintances; and delighted at this answer the old Plymouth Brother cried, striking his bosom: It makes me happy here. A truly Protestant state of feeling, so much so that the words bring a responsive thrill into the heart of every Protestant that reads them. Of this Stevenson seems to have been aware, but he does not seem to have understood that this peasant might have a son who would be more moved by the motion of a priest's finger giving him a blessing than by the spectacle of the sunrise.

The old Plymouth Brother follows Stevenson to the inn and listens to him in admiration and delight, feeling for the first time the spiritual intimacy of which he has been long deprived, his lot having been cast in the Catholic village. There are many of us up yonder, he said, none here. Stevenson draws a comparison between his own feelings regarding this man and the feelings of the excellent friar whom he met road-making on the summits leading to the monastery, 'Our Lady of the Snows.' I have not got the passage before me, but I think that my memory does not betray me. Stevenson admits that with some reservations he can make common cause with the Plymouth Brother; but he finds himself aloof in the company of the friar, though he is constrained to allow that the friar is as worthy a man as the Plymouth Brother. This seems to me to be true. If a man be of a Protestant kin he is at home and at spiritual communion with all Protestant sects—Congregationalists, Quakers, Wesleyans and Methodists and Unitarians. He is not separated from them as he is from Papists. An Agnostic, too, is at home with all Protestant sects. Whether a man stays away from church or goes to church is a matter of no importance. He may be an atheist and still feel himself

to be of the same communion as Protestants, for atheism and Protestantism rest on the same foundation—the right of private judgment. Nor can theological differences concern us Protestants very acutely, for no man knows what he believes, moral differences are more important, and it follows that if we surrender our right of private judgment we become if not immoral at least unmoral; and that is why Protestants feel themselves so strangely aloof among Catholics. Any curtailment of the body operates on the mind, and the stinted mind soon begins to put on a different complexion, as none can have failed to notice that keep cats. The Tom from next door is manifestly ill at ease in the company of my Blackie, who has been to the butcher, and I have often thought that the embarrassment he feels is not unlike mine when I happen to drift into the company of Papists.

The falsetto scream that comes out of Ireland and a certain untrustworthiness in the national character may be traced back to the relinquishment of the right to private judgment; without it a man is not wholly a man, I said, and striving immediately afterwards to mitigate the thought that had come into my mind, I continued: But all is not black or white; grey is the primal colour. There are Protestant Catholics, and there are Catholic Protestants. But are there? I asked. And is grey as interesting in live animals as it is on the painter's palette? And are the all-buts more interesting than the pure neutrals?

CHAP. XIII.

THE house stands at the foot of the hill between the end of the street and the high wood, hidden behind walls, only its long low roof showing, the passenger along the foot-path getting no more than a glimpse of it through the tall gates, open only for carriages and motors, our-

selves coming and going by the wicket. A somewhat gloomy residence it must seem to him who stops before the gates, the charm and life of the house being on the other side, about a lawn shelving steeply, and rising up as steeply to the high wood. A river is heard muttering in the valley, and its banks come into view presently describing a curve so formal that our thoughts are carried back into the eighteenth century, when labour could be obtained for sixpence a day. It was then, we say, the river was deviated from its natural course to make a beautiful little domain. A foison of briers and ash saplings grows out of the river's walls and is pitching them stone by stone into the river, adding to its picturesqueness. I shall listen to the brown river bubbling past a great cedar for a week. From the tennis ground the lawn slants upwards, pleasantly diversified by bunched hawthorns, casting round beautiful shadows about five o'clock in the afternoon. And about the house are tall ash-trees and beeches, in June filled with young rooks trying their wings from branch to branch. If the breeze shakes the branch too violently they fall into the shrubberies, where the parent bird, who would feed them, may seek them and find them. One of the girls shoots the young rooks with a pea rifle as they swing; and this always seems to me a cruelty; for rooks are not eaten in Ireland. It may matter little to the dead birds whether they are thrown to cats or dogs, or whether they are baked in pies; but the same might be said of ourselves, that it matters little to a man whether he lies in a vault or is thrown on a dung-hill; yet we cannot detach our hopes from vaults, wherefore then should not young rooks be prejudiced in favour of interment in pies, for it were surely more honourable to lie with hard-boiled eggs and bacon, under a dome of well-kneaded pastry, than to be dragged about a greensward by a dog—too often the fate of thoughtless young rooks, and the same shall befall

this year as I sit on the shelving lawn convinced that there is nothing in this world more beautiful than the round shadows of hawthorn-trees dropping down a grassy hill-side, and of all when the grassy hill-side ascends towards a high wood.

Only in this house and on this lawn and during the June weather do I escape from literature, from secretaries, from manuscripts, from proofs, and surrender myself to an almost thoughtless idleness, and to snatches of conversations with my friends, who have too many projects of their own to attend to one who has no project outside of his dreams. A girl rises from the breakfast-table saying she has a bicycle ride of many miles in front of her; another speaks of a fishing-party, and when the family collects about the dinner-table, one narrates the adventures of her ride, another telling how a fortnight hence she and another girl will be camping out on one of the islands in the bay, and listening to them I begin to think that I should be a different George Moore if I were married. There would be a difference certainly, and a very real difference, and in this house the difference appeals to me as a subject of a story; the invention of my married self would be a real flight of the imagination, and the struggle between myself and circumstance a piece of literature. The wife I should choose for æsthetical reasons may be revealed to me in a sudden flash as I sit on the sunny lawn if the day be fine, or if it be wet, as I read in the billiard-room looking forward to my walk through the most musical wood in the world, a river tumbling round and over the boulders, a sort of ground-base accompaniment to the songs of blackbirds and thrushes.

A river flowing through a high wood awakens our childhood, not dead but sleeping; our primal imaginations return to us—dragons, giants and elves; and so eager are we to escape from the present back into the past that

we begin to feel an annoyance creep up in us as we descend the shelving lawn. The old-fashioned flowers whose names are familiar do not let us from the past, but the flowering bushes—certain pink flowers whose name is perhaps begonia—impede us, and a strange word 'calceolaria,' a plant or bush, bearing some ugly yellow flower or berry, we know not which, bars our way, and imprisons us in the present. But the wood will give back our childhood to us; in this moment of crisis we remember at the bend of the river some dark spiky foliage favoured with a name so beautiful that our memory should have retained it without difficulty from one year to the next; but again it has passed out of our mind. But as soon as this dense growth is behind me, I say to myself, I shall be among forest trees, the humble cow-parsley and lowly blue-bells and the winding speedwell running in and out between the tall grasses will set me thinking once again that there is no flower that speaks as plainly as the speedwell, not even the wild geranium which I shall find higher up in the wood overhanging the stream.

As I approach the woodland I continue to enumerate the flowers I shall meet there: the speedwell will brighten my way, and I shall catch sight of rocket here and there amid the tall grasses, and peonies white and pink and purple. Rhododendrons are all through the high wood. I shall see again a tall spray of rhododendron flowering in the lonely twilight of a wooded island, maybe, and for sure I shall walk under pale green foliage filled with noisy rooks, talking of course, but of what? Ah! if we knew.

CHAP. XIV.

MY every step produces a clamour of wings in the greenery above me: the jackdaws have nests in the boles

in the elm and their caw is softer than the rook's, and as I walk I regret not being able to take back a jackdaw to London for a pet, for no bird is more inclined to domesticity than he is, quitting his kind for our kind if he receive any slight encouragement to do so.

In a moment, and without my being conscious of the departure of rooks and jackdaws, two birds that the gardener told me last year were dippers engage my attention, and I remember that the name he put upon them did not satisfy me, and how pleasurable it was to seek them out in an illustrated book and to discover the almost tailless birds shapen like wrens, with white waistcoats, to be water-ousels—birds that had merely a Wordsworthian reality for me till I saw them in Westport.

It is delightful to meet in life what one is a little weary of meeting in poetry; to watch the rapid beat of their wings as they fly, resting every twenty or thirty yards upon a boulder, now and then plunging into the water, to run along the bottom in search of worms, so the book informed me, and it became a passion in me to try to verify the fact.

The birds go under water in search of food, there could be no doubt of that, since they did not seek their food on land; but the nature of the food they sought could hardly be worms; for worms do not live under water; and standing like a stock I apply myself to the observation of the birds without, however, gathering a single fact except that their flight is short and rapid like the kingfisher's; and I say to myself: To note anything new about them I shall have to discover their nest; for they have a nest here surely, though the season is late. One only meets them on the island, if I may call it such. An island it was certainly in the mind of the eighteenth-century designer, but the channel he dug has filled up with mud, but with mud still sufficiently liquid to justify the appellation of island for a very beautiful and ro-

mantic spot protected by mud on one side and a river on the other from sight-seers beguiled to trespass by the tranquillity of these woods, and the high ruin hanging over the crest of the hill. None knows that island except the water-ousels, I say to myself as I walk thither; and birds who do not frequent trees nest in old walls.

But how beautiful are the trees in their island seclusion; and with unwearying fondness my eyes wander among the tall stems and out upon the branches, admiring the anatomy and the architecture, convinced, and my conviction is ecstatic, that in this world there is nothing so admirable as a tree, or so mysterious. Small wonder, I say, that men have worshipped them; would that I too might worship, and upon the wings of a perfervid desire of worship my thoughts melt into a thoughtless contemplation of an overhanging tree that a boy would have liked to use as a bridge, but being no longer a boy I meditate on the noble gesture, saying to myself: A fallen or falling tree humanises a wood.

The ousels have disappeared into the nest that I shall never find; and I move up the path that I may get a better view of the great white wall of an ancient mill pierced with many windows, through which the sunset will pour as the last train rattles over the viaduct on its way to Achill, emphasising the solitude of the wood as it ascends amid high rock.

It could not have been else than here, I say, that my infantile eyes would have espied dragons, giants and elves in the twilight of overhanging clefts; and who can say they are not here still? 'Tis our former selves that have vanished; we are always losing and winning something; nothing is permanent within or without. In childhood I saw dragons, giants and elves, and now I see high trees, ivy clad, lifting themselves with lovely gesture out of a tangle of hawthorn, with the pale pink rhododendron blossom resting atop of its tall stem in the solitude of a

wooded island—the same as last year. Of what have I to complain?—we only change our visions; and my philosophy is confirmed a few yards farther on by a group of laburnums venturing into the river for all the world like a group of golden-haired nymphs.

The hart's tongue and the Royal Osmunda should do well here, I say, and my eyes begin a search for the tall, pale, reed-like fern of which there is not one about, and I pause, for at that moment an otter slides into the river noiselessly; and seeing the dark animal come up with a fish in its mouth and disappear into the bank, I begin to think of the hungry cubs at the end of a hole about three feet deep, of all I had read about tame otters, and of the stiffness of the ascent up the hill-side—an ascent that a few years hence I shall undertake with some little difficulty, but which to-day is pleasant exercise.

The path leads through tall boles rising like spears, a beech wood; and soon after I find myself beset as of yore by thoughts regarding a wall some twenty feet high descending steeply into a lovely hollow and rising up again as steeply, saying to myself: A strange thought it was surely to build a wall twenty feet high through a wood: but it adds to the mystery of this little domain designed so finely by Nature, one that, *Le Nôtre* would have said, I can neither add to nor curtail.

And on coming out of the wood I find myself on a sort of terrace or terraced walk overlooking the deer park—a deer park of twenty acres! In the eighteenth century a deer park was a necessary adjunct to every gentleman's residence, and in Ireland the eighteenth century did not end till 1870, therefore, in my boyhood, almost every residence of distinction in Mayo had a deer park—that Moore Hall should be without one was a source of shame and regret to me; and it was not infrequent for me to drop into meditations regarding a possible extension of the Stone Park. As late as the sixties there were deer in

Castle Carra; and the great mass of brushwood (through which we used to wend our way with our luncheons—a picnic in the ruined castle was a pleasure looked forward to eagerly) might be purchased from Sir Robert Blosse if one of our race-horses would win a big race. And these dreams of long ago were revived by the miniature deer park of Westport Lodge—a deer park of twenty acres, in which the last stag was shot some years ago on account of his refusal to share his paddock or park with a jackass; the jackass was required for the children, and the stag was an old friend that lived on excellent terms with everybody but the jackass, what was to be done? And the perplexity the stag caused in his life did not end with his death; nobody would eat this noble and affable friend. He was given to the dogs, I believe. But away with such memories.

Above me rises a wall of great height covered with a thick green creeper, heart-shapen papery leaves forming an obscure growth at the foot of the wall, and filled with a blue flower so uninteresting that it is called periwinkle; nor does it deserve a nobler name, and only a man lacking in the finer instincts would stop to consider it on a terrace commanding so admirable a view—the wooded park descending in many beautiful shapes, and beyond its trees the roofs of the town showing against the dark sides of the Westport hills; hill after hill rising up in rugged outlines like bastions designed as if to support the almost too perfect symmetry of St. Patrick's Hill. A peak as regular as the famous volcano that the Japanese painters spent their lives in the eighteenth century drawing and redrawing, and saying to each other: If we live for another fifty years we may produce a drawing that will satisfy us. But in Ireland nobody draws, and popular imagination was satisfied by the building of a tiresome church on the top of it, whither pilgrims go wearing their shoe leather away and emptying their

pockets. A whilom volcano, so it is said, in the back end of time, some five hundred thousand years maybe before the birth of man. I had once thought that with five hundred tons of dynamite the regularity of the peak might be undone, but to-day it seems to me that the peak is all right in its landscape. I would change nothing, not even the church that has been built atop of St. Patrick. In God's good time the people will weary of prayers and turn to drawing, and what a vision of outlines for their pencils. On looking into the gap between the trees and the Westport hills, we see a faint blue line of dentilated hills almost lost to view in about five and twenty or thirty miles of distance, the first chain of the Connemara mountains.

CHAP. XV.

AT this moment Jim comes panting to heel, having failed to get on the trail of a rabbit. Jim is May's dog; and I may have been guilty of an error in composition in not having introduced the reader to the lean, long-legged fox terrier who finds it at first difficult to remember me over the long interval of eleven months. He sniffs and sniffs again, his memory returning with every sniff, and at the fifth or sixth he barks, and there is no mistaking the bark; it says as plainly as words: You're the gentleman who takes me out rabbiting. And from that moment he waits and watches, and when I raise my eyes from the book I catch his eye, and after a time I say: Jim, you've been waiting a long time, the book that I'm reading must seem very tiresome to you, let us go. At these words he utters a most joyful bark, and scampers round the billiard-table. If I put on my hat he is nearly sure he is going to be taken out, if I take the stick he is certain, and away we go in the hope of a rabbit. There is a record, or at least a legend, of Jim having succeeded in

catching a rabbit on the hill-side, but within my knowledge the triumph has always been missed, the rabbit succeeding in escaping down the gullet out of which he came from Lord Sligo's domain.

The first time that I witnessed the escape of the rabbit was about three years ago. Jim, who had brought a fine scent into the world with him, got on the trail of the rabbit at the beginning of the wood, and went away, his nose to the ground, at full gallop without posting me, as he should have done, to cut off the retreat, and being ignorant of the nature of the ground, it fell out that I stopped unhappily at some ten or a dozen yards from the gullet, instead of at the entrance of the gullet itself: ten yards higher up the hill, ten yards nearer to the gullet, I should have been able to turn a rabbit back who seemed no wise in a hurry, the dog having lost the scent, and the rabbit seemingly aware of the loss stopped, meditated a moment, and before I could intervene hopped leisurely into the little drain and passed up the gullet. The dog arrived a few seconds afterwards and began the fruitless digging. Poor Jim was disappointed, and it was with difficulty he was persuaded to renounce the task, which in his heart he must have known to be hopeless, of digging out the rabbit. On many other occasions I bade Jim to heel till I was fairly stationed at the gullet and then bade him hunt, but on all these occasions there was no rabbit. It was not till last year that a rabbit bounded out of the undergrowth with Jim after him yelping like a Red Indian on the war-path, and I following down into the dell and up again striving to reach the gullet before the rabbit. It may be that I arrived too late and it may be that the rabbit bounded back and escaped by another gullet, all that can be said definitely is that the rabbit escaped. More than that would be surmise, conjecture.

This year as last year Jim will accompany me, but I shall not lend him my aid to catch the rabbit by standing

myself at the gullet, I shall entertain the hope that the rabbit will continue to escape, for were the rabbit taken the hill-side would lose some of its wonder, some of its mystery, some of its adventure. But no such misfortune as the taking of the rabbit will befall us; the rabbit is never taken in Ireland, and let us hope that the future will be like the past, and that the history of Ireland will continue to be marked by the escape of the rabbit; for were the rabbit taken the country would sink into such stupor and lethargy as would frighten God in His high throne in Heaven.

CHAP. XVI.

ONE day in my walks in the high wood I spied a man standing on a boulder in the midst of the river, seemingly undecided whether he should jump to the next one; and knowing the pool to be deep between the boulders I tried to dissuade him. There's no chance of drowning, he cried to me, but if I miss my step I'll be up to my belt. I called out that to cross the river he would be trespassing on private rights, but he did not heed my warning. He jumped again; and, laying hold of a protruding root, began to climb the bank, telling me as he made his way up that the master (the gentleman in whose house I was staying) would have nothing to say against the gathering of a few ferns along the river's bank. A fern-gatherer, I said, and followed him asking questions, not so much for the answers he gave as for the pleasure it was to listen to his low, musical voice, a tenor voice, in keeping, it seemed to me, with his pale, almost affectionate eyes, shining like jewels in a pointed oval face; a young man who had just passed out of his first youth; an Irish peasant, but far from the typical, I said, when I left him to his search and continued my walk through the beech wood, not able to forget his spare chestnut beard, his

moustache and his comely, well-knit figure. These, so it seemed to me, I had seen before and many times, but where I had seen them I could not remember, and it was not till after long soul searching it occurred to me that I had seen him in pictures. Yes, I murmured to myself, he is the Jesus that has come down to us from the fifteenth century, imagined first perhaps by Fra Angelico, and repeated ever since by many thousands of painters, inclining more and more to the feminine and epicene type, becoming a woman in Holman Hunt's picture, *The Light of the World,* Miss Christina Rossetti, with a blonde beard and moustache. But, I continued, my fern-gatherer does not reproduce the fond emptiness of Jesus's face; he is with it all a man; and there can be no doubt that I am doing him an injustice by associating him with Holman Hunt's version of Christina Rossetti in a blonde beard. My fern-gatherer is a man and altogether himself in the life he has chosen for himself. A romantic figure, I added, one which does honour to the town of Westport.

He had already captured my imagination by dinner-time, and at the first pause in the conversation, when the girls' narratives of the day's doings had ceased, I related our meeting, and learnt that legends had already begun to collect about him. His name? I asked anxiously, feeling I should be disappointed if his name were among those that one wearies of in Ireland—Higgins, Walsh, O'Connor, Murphy. That it might not be Murphy I prayed inly. Alec Trusselby! It would be strange, indeed, I exclaimed, if legends had not begun to collect about a name like that, and begged that all that was known about him should be told to me at once. Everybody was willing to tell, and the biographical scraps uttered from different ends and sides of the dinner-table were in keeping with his name.

I learnt from one member of the family that Alec had

been to America and had suffered from sunstroke, from another that he lived in the woods all the summer-time, bringing back beech and oak ferns to Westport and getting for them a fair share of money; and from another that his voice and manner were so winning that it was difficult not to be his customer, and as every customer became a patron, Alec had no cause for complaint. Even if he had he is not the kind of man that would complain, a girl suddenly interjected, and turning to her I asked: How is that? She replied that he was a very shy man who would remain silent for long intervals to break into speech suddenly like a bird. This seemed to me a good description, but I had not seen enough of Alec at that time to be able to vouch for its accuracy. A girl told me the report was that Alec had built himself a summer dwelling in a great tree, and I answered that what she said did not surprise me. Lying in his bed under the boughs, I said, he caught his style from the moody blackbird who fills the wood at dawn with his exalted lay; more likely still from the meditative thrush. But how does Alec live through the winter? I asked, and it was delightful to hear that in the winter he related stories about the firesides in the cottages, and that no one refused Alec bed and board if he could help it; Alec's company was sought for by everybody; and a suspicion was abroad that to treat him ill was to bring ill luck upon oneself. Gathering ferns in the summer and telling stories in the winter, I repeated, becoming possessed in a moment of an absorbing interest in Alec Trusselby. Is he an Irish speaker? I asked, and heard that he was one of the best in the county of Mayo. But, a girl cried across the table, mind, if he suspects you of laughing at him he will run away at once, and don't tell him you're a Protestant, he might refuse to go into the woods with you. With a heretic? I added.

A custard pudding interrupted the conversation about

Alec, but as soon as everybody had been helped it returned to him, and I learnt that the gentle winning personality that had awakened fellow-feeling in me was only one side of Alec Trusselby; there was another, and one well known to the Westport police—staunch friends of his, always ready to take his part when Alec's less reputable associates mocked him in the street after drinking his money away in the public-house, their joke being to try to grab the Murrigan, not an easy thing to do, for it never left his hand, and where the Murrigan was concerned Alec was resolute and strong. The Murrigan? I interjected. He calls his blackthorn the Murrigan, one of the girls answered; but we don't know what the word means, whether it's an Irish word or a word invented by himself. I wonder if the police could tell me? I said. Now why should the police be bothering their heads with what Alec means when he calls his stick the Murrigan? my friend, the girl's father, blurted out; and he laughed the short, quick, intelligent laugh whereby I remember him. Haven't they enough to do to keep him out of jail? And he told a story how, returning home late one night, he had come upon Trusselby and the police—the sergeant and the constable engaged in trying to persuade Alec to return to his lodging. You see, Alec, you're free to follow them if you like: the constable has let go your arm, the sergeant was saying. But if you take my advice you'll be taking yourself and the Murrigan home like the quiet, good man that you are, the divil a better. If they insult you again we'll let yourself and the Murrigan at them, but this time we'll be asking you to let them pass on, for to break their skulls with the Murrigan would be conferring too much honour upon them. You see, said mine host, we have all a kindly feeling for Trusselby, myself as well as the police; to keep him out of jail takes us all our time, and we haven't that much over to be ferreting out the meaning

of all the talk that goes on between himself and his stick as he walks the roads. But he's not half-witted? I asked, looking round the dinner-table, preferring a general to an individual opinion, and the company was agreed that Alec could not be held to be a loon. And his stories? I asked; but none at the table had felt sufficient curiosity to ask him to tell one. I'd give a great deal, I said, to hear Trusselby tell a story, and was warned not to offer him a big sum of money, but to wait an occasion to win his confidence. If you offer him a sovereign to tell you a story you'll frighten him; he'll begin to suspect some evil and you'll get nothing out of him. But I may not meet Trusselby again, and if I did, to the end of my visit is not a long time to win his confidence—I shall be leaving in a few days. You can stay as long as you like, my host and my hostess interjected, we would like to see you friends with Trusselby before you leave.

The next day one of the girls rushed into the room in which I was writing: Trusselby is coming down the hill, she said, and I bolted out after him. You sell ferns, don't you? I asked; he answered that he did, and I asked him to get me some. He said he would and passed on, and I returned to the house disappointed. But luck was with me, and two evenings later, returning home after dining with a friend, I met Trusselby at the river-side, whirling the Murrigan and apparently in a convivial mood. Well, Alec, I said, have you come upon the royal or the hart's tongue in your walks? You're the gentleman I met the other day up at the old mill, aren't you? he asked. I answered that I was, and we walked on together, myself making conversation, afraid every moment that Trusselby would say: I must be wishing you good-night, sir, or I'll be locked out. But it was unlikely that Trusselby had a latchkey, it was more probable that he contemplated spending the night out, which would be no great hardship, for the night was warm and still, and

were it not that a bench is a hard bed, the most home-loving and respectable man in Westport might have liked to have lain out of doors, sooner or later to be hushed to sleep by the almost inaudible sound of water rippling past and the soft cawing of sleepy rooks. A night it was that would keep anybody out of his bed till midnight at least, except, perhaps, a dry old curmudgeon. A breathless night, full of stars, and perchance stories, I said to myself, and then aloud to Alec: Yes, we met up at the old mill, but you didn't find the ferns you were looking for? Is it the royal you're after? Alec asked, and I answered that that was what I had in mind, and having listened to Trusselby for some time on the rarity of the fern, I broke in with the remark that I'd never seen a finer blackthorn than the one he was carrying.

He had come upon it in a brake, he said, in a thicket that often served him as a bedroom in a summer's night when his quest for ferns had led him far from Westport. And it was one morning at sunrise that I spied her; she was no thicker that morning than one of my fingers, and I said to myself: In about three years' time that stem will be the finest in Ireland if the top be cut at once so that it may be throwing out little knots and spikes. The knots begin almost at the top, sir, and at every knot there is three spikes. You would be lost if you started counting them, just as you might be if you were to start on the stars in the skies. It was the blessing of God that I saw the Murrigan that morning, for a year later it would have been too late to cut the top. I was only in time, and there it stayed for its three years sprouting, with three spikes coming out on every knot. You can see them, sir, all the way up. Faith, there isn't half-an-inch of the stick without its three spikes. But if somebody had gone into the brake and seen the stick before you? I asked. I had to risk that, sir, for it takes three full years for the stick to furnish, and often I didn't like

going to the brake for fear a person might spy me and be wondering what I was after and perhaps be coming in behind me and find out the stick; but sure I had the luck all the time and nobody came. In three years to the day, your honour, I was down in the dingle cutting my stick, my heart filled with joy so furnished was it. Mind you, sir, the seasoning of a blackthorn isn't understood by every man, for when you've cut your stick you must season it, and the place I was living in then had a fine old chimney with a flue inside of it on which you could rest a stick, and there the Murrigan rested seasoning. After six good months I took it down and gave it a rub with an oil rag, and I'll tell you, mister, it was good for sore eyes to see the way it was coming up. Take a look at it yourself now and tell me, is there a bit of Spanish mahogany in the country is its equal for colour. To this I agreed, and asked: Is that the reason you call it the Murrigan? Well, it isn't, your honour. Do you see, Murrigan means 'great queen' in the Irish, and my stick here is the queen of the fair this many a day. The stick knows it too, for if I'm not at the fair off goes the Murrigan without me; I look round in the morning, but not a stick can I see, so I say: The Murrigan's gone, and she'll be breaking the head of some poor chap out of sheer light-heartedness and divilment. That's the way it does be, sir, for after she's gone there's somebody has a cracked head somewhere. No one knows who breaks it, barring the Murrigan, and she tells nobody, but just flies back unbeknownst to anybody, and finds her old place in the corner just as any creature would. And there I find her, waiting for me. Have a look at the Murrigan, sir, for you'll never see another like her. She's as beautifully ornamented as the Brooch of Tara itself. So the Murrigan goes to the fair by herself? She does so, your honour, and she flies round the heads of the people, urging them on the way the old Murrigan used to do when

Brian Boru was in it, waking up the spirit of fight in them. The Murrigan whirls like an eagle over the heads of the people, prodding them here and poking them there, and putting them at each other. When I'm there, and the Murrigan with me, I feel my hand rise up and my head is that elated I don't know whether it's me or the Murrigan is doing the deeds, and I don't know if the stars that are in my head aren't thicker and twice as thick than they are in the sky. All I can see is the Murrigan about me and she whirling like a bird, but never leaving me five fingers; a faithful thing the Murrigan, bless her soul, and she saved my life many a time, good luck to her!

Trusselby kissed his blackthorn and we leaned our backs against the parapet of the bridge, looking up into the sky, the town asleep, nothing to be heard about us but the ripple of the river. Trusselby seemed to have forgotten me, and I wondered of what he could be thinking, of some battle long ago, I thought, in which doubtless the Murrigan played a great part, and seeing a smile playing over his bland, almost holy face, I said: There used to be great fighting long ago? It was about fighting I was thinking, your honour, a great fair at Castlebar, when there were more two-year-olds than three-year-olds about. To check the story that was on his lips with a question would have been fatal, so I held my peace, hoping to learn whether the fair was lacking in three-year-old bullocks or three-year-old colts and fillies. He began again after a pause. You see, sir, in the old times when your ancestors were in it, God rest their souls, in the days of your grandfather, there was an O'Brien sold a heifer to a Fitzgerald for a two-year-old, but the heifer itself was a three-year-old; and the next fair day there was a fight between Fitzgerald and O'Brien; and at the next fair the Fitzgerald brothers and the O'Brien brothers were fighting; and the fair day after that the cousins

were in the fight, and after the cousins the friends came in on one side and the other, until it was a dangerous thing to hold any fair in the country at all, so great was the fighting; after whacking with all the blackthorns in the country over all the skulls in the country for more than fifty years the war finished, and it was only at the heel of the hunt that I strolled in one fair day to Castlebar. There was a man there, and somebody made a cake of his skull with a tap of a stick. Nobody knew who did it. He said it was the policeman, and he took out a summons against the policeman. Well, I was a witness in the case, your honour, and I couldn't see an innocent man condemned even if he was a peeler itself. When I came before the magistrate he asked if I was standing by at the time. I was, your Worship, says I; and he says: Was it the policeman broke the man's head? and I said: It was not, your Worship; the policeman didn't hit the man that tap. A tap, you call it, said the man, Michael Joyce was his name, and he lifted up the bloody bandage that was upon his brow. 'Tis more than a tap, your Worship, says I, it's a clout; but tap or clout, it wasn't the policeman gave it to him. You're on your oath, Alec Trusselby, he said. And I said: Before God! and I gave a swear that it wasn't the policeman. Now what do you think but the magistrate was looking into Joyce's face, and he saw three little weeney holes around his eye, and he took notice of them three little holes, and when I picked up the Murrigan and was going out of the box he said: Let me have a look at your stick, Trusselby, so I gave it to him, and he said: Wasn't it you gave the man the tap? And I said: It was so, your Worship. Tell me, says he, why did you strike that blow? So I ups and I told him the story of the two-year-olds and the three-year-olds. Which was he, said the magistrate, was he a two-year-old or a three-year-old? Your Worship, says I, he was like myself, he was a two-year-old. And why

did you assault and batter the man? Well, you see, your Worship, says I, there was only a few of us in that fair. We was outnumbered altogether by the three-year-olds, and Joyce yonder was saying he'd like well to see the man who'd tread on the tail of his coat, and seeing that there would be a fight in which we might be worsted I just gave him a tap to make him quiet like, and to keep him out of harm's way.

So that's the story of the Murrigan? It is, your honour, I've told you the whole of it. A wonderful stick she is; look at her; every knob with three little spikes like the blessed shamrock that St. Patrick picked so that he would be able to explain the Holy Trinity to the pagans. A beautiful stick, I said, and a very interesting story. You know many stories, Alec, and can tell them better than any man now living. It's puffing me up with pride and goster you'd be, your honour, and after reminding him that he had promised to bring me some beech and oak ferns we parted, myself regretting that my shyness had prevented me from asking Alec to tell me a story. The night is fine, I said, and he was in the humour; he wouldn't have refused, but I've missed my chance unless I fortune to meet him again before leaving Westport.

It was two days afterwards that I met Trusselby speeding down the road from the woods, his hands full of ferns, and accosting him with a pleasant good-morning and a reference to our talk by the bridge under the elm-trees I invited him to come up to the high wood with me. You may have overlooked some ferns, I said. He did not answer, but his eyes said plainly enough that he didn't believe he had overlooked any. Well, come with me, I said. If we find some ferns so much the better, if we don't I'll reward you for your afternoon all the same. Well, if it will please your honour, I'll come up with you. We found no ferns, but, as if to compensate me for

my factitious disappointment, Alec proposed to go to Ilanaidi to search for the royal, and, after visiting all the moist banks and hollows of the town-land, we returned with some fine specimens of beech and oak ferns, some specimens of the hart's tongue—a beautiful tall fern flowing out like a ribbon, Alec's own description of it—and in our hearts the hope that on another day we might be more fortunate and come upon the royal. And to the gate of my friend's house Alec continued to assure me that it had been heard of between Ilanaidi and Castlebar. At the wicket I gave him to understand that I was ready when he was for a day in the woods and fields. Till to-morrow, were my last words to him, and as soon as they were spoken my face changed expression, for Ilanaidi was four or five miles from Westport, and there and back would be a long way for a man of letters.

CHAP. XVII.

DID Alec tell you any stories? my friend asked, and his short, ironical laugh jarred a little. No; I heard no stories, but patience is the virtue of the folk-lorist. You don't mean that you're going for another tramp with Alec? Yes, we start to-morrow at nine. Well, you're an extraordinary fellow, my host said. Every man is extraordinary to his fellow, I answered; our quests are different; and the next day I went forth again, to return with an increased knowledge of ferns but without any stories. Indeed, I had almost begun to believe that a joke was being put upon me. It was often on my tongue to say: In the winter evenings I suppose you tell stories in the cottages, but I had restrained myself, and it is not unlikely that it was to break through my studied reserve that he began to speak, some days later, of Liadin and Curithir, saying they used to meet by the druid stone under which we were now sitting eating the food we had

brought with us. And who may they be? I asked. You don't read their names in the stories that are going round about old Ireland, he answered, but 'tis many and many's the time I've heard my father say that there wasn't the like of that pair for the making of poems. The names seemed to kindle a new personality in him. The lantern is lighted, I said; we shall see whither it leads us. In the years back, he continued, it was a favourite story with the people, but they don't care much about it here. It is out of their minds now like the rest of the old shanachies, and all they have a taste for is the yarns they do be reading in the newspapers and the like; stuff without any diet in them. They are not like the story I'm talking of, the story of Liadin and Curithir. But I would be wearying your honour with it. You might not be caring for old stories. There's nothing to my mind better than an old story, I answered. The birds are singing overhead; the time is for story-telling; go on, Alec.

CHAP. XVIII.

WELL, since your honour is so pleasant I'll tell it. At the first going off, let you know that Liadin and Curithir were two great poets, as great as any that ever went the round in Ireland, though there has been more talk about others than about them. Usheen was the biggest of the lot, and I'm not comparing Liadin and Curithir to himself. All the same Curithir was a fine poet and Liadin wasn't far behind him for the telling of stories and the singing of songs in the courts of the kings, and the like, where they'd all be clamouring and shouting for her at the end of their feasts. She was from Corkaguiney, or, as they call it now, the County Cork, and she was on her way there when she met Curithir, who was on his rounds to the west and would be going north shortly with his

thousand stories, for he had a stiffer memory than Liadin's, although his songs weren't as soothing to men after drinking a gallon or more of ale. A gallon was nothing to people in those days! And so it was with these two that I am telling your honour about, and they sharing the glory of Ireland between them.

Every spring of the year they would be passing this stone, beside which your honour is lying, as they were bound to, it being the mearing. And every time they passed it Liadin said to herself: Curithir knows more poems than I do but my own songs are sweeter than Curithir's. And every time Curithir passed it he said: Many's the time I've gone by here thinking to meet Liadin, whose songs make game men of all men, though what they be at is love or war, strutting and striving to outdo one and t'other, trailing their coats like a cock his wing. She passes this way every year like I do myself, Curithir said; and we always missing each other as if it was the will of God. And while he was thinking away like I'm telling you, a feeling came over him that it would be well for him to bide his time, it being about the season that she would be on her way to the south. Nor had he long to wait, for before the light was gone he saw two women coming through the dusk, and he knew them to be Liadin and her tiring woman, for no one else would be wandering through a lonesome place at nightfall, unless it was herdsmen that were come to bring the cows home for the milk to be drawn out of them. Isn't it true, says Curithir, to himself, she is coming to touch this stone like everybody that travels north or south? but though he said to himself—it is she—he wasn't sure that it was, and his heart was fluttering as if it would burst his breast open and lay him stiff before her. With every step she took the cold sweat was starting on his forehead, and his face was gone as pale as the grass beyond will be in the heel of the year; and then, as she came nearer, and the sight

of her face became plain, a great swimming came behind his eyes and he might have fallen, she was that beautiful. He said: Her body is like a first night's snow, her hair is curly as the wool on a ram's head, her lips are red as the rowan berry, and her voice is sweet and low like the wind whispering among the reeds when the summer is coming in.

At last I am looking at yourself, Curithir, and it is not too soon that I set my eyes on you, for every springtime, a day, or at the most a week, has been coming between our two bodies and our two souls. Faith, Liadin of the songs, I've been thinking that myself, and it was a good thought bade me a while back to wait here where I am lest you might be passing. Do you hear that, Lomna Druth? Curithir asked, turning from Liadin to his dwarf who was cocked up on the druid stone with the poet's singing robe in a purple bag lying beside him. I've half a mind to leave you cocked up there, so that you may be breaking one of your little legs trying to climb down, or if there be no heart in you to dare to climb down, to die up there, and you howling for a bite or a sup and none coming. But my happiness is so great now that I'll even forgive you for urging me to my journey and making me miss her whom I've been waiting for this long time, and who is before us now. He would have said more than that to Lomna Druth, for he was angry at the thought that he had been near to missing Liadin again. But at the sight of her there was no more thought in him for Lomna Druth, and turning from the ugly little fellow he stood gazing and gaping at the beautiful woman before him without a word to say to her, for his throat was like a lime-kiln and hers was hardly better. A spell seemed to be on the two of them, caused by the long waiting and by the spring of the year. At last she got out the words: Brigit, my tiring woman, was to sleep here by this stone. But if you and the Lomna Druth have chosen this place

for your bed we would not be—— Faith, said Curithir, wouldn't it be the poor thing if we could not spend one night listening to the stories that every person in Ireland has heard but our two selves alone.

But not a story, nor the beginning of a story, could either tell the other, so great was the longing and the uneasiness and the torment that was in them. While they were that way the Lomna Druth was snoring away like a stuck pig, with his mouth wide open, and the moon staring down his gullet; nor was Brigit far behind him, and the noise them two were making with their snores and their snorts put all the stories out of Curithir's head so that he could not remember one of them at all and was stumbling and forgetting himself until Liadin took pity on him. So she said: Let us leave these people where they are and we will go and look out for a quiet place in the wood where we can talk. He knew what was in her mind, and got on his feet, and she came after him saying: I cannot go with you, and he answering: You can, you can, indeed, overcoming her with the story of a place where the grass was thick under the larches: where, he said, we shall be missing the droppings of the rooks, for they have their nests higher up on the hill-side. So cosening was his talk she could not say no to him, and that night they lay with their lips seeking each other's lips always, his hand never wearying of the shape of her body, nor his eyes wearying either, for the moon shining through the tasselled branches gave light enough for him to enjoy her with his eyes. So he not wearying and she nothing loth spent the night together, taking their joy of each other until the rooks began to clatter out of the high wood and went away one by one and two by two down the valley filled with mist for all the world like a lake. No person, he said, looking from her, would know the mist from a lake that had come in the night to divide us, and she said: A lake come to divide us! And he answered

her reproof: No, we're together for as long as this flesh lasts. On speaking these words there came a piercing in him with the knowledge that he would lose Liadin. How he would lose her he did not know; but there was fear in him that he would lose her surely. It was in her too, but being a woman she kept the thought to herself.

My Brigit and your Lomna Druth, she said, will come this way searching for us; it would be as well that we should go to them instead. It would be as well indeed, he replied angrily, but I wish all the same that the warning had not come from you, and without saying any more they went back in search of their servants. Curithir, guessing Liadin's thoughts, said: From this day our life will be lonesome for us two, and not one of us knows how we lived our lives up to this day, and we not seeing each other every day and every night; so hazy is it all that I do believe it was but a dream that a reality broke last night. I'm feeling like that myself, she said, but I would have you make your meaning plainer to me. Says he: Is it not plain enough what I say that you are the greatest poetess Ireland has ever known and I am the greatest poet; let us go off together for good and all, and we will have a son to our name who'll be greater than the two of us. I like well, she answered, that you should be thinking such things, but if I said yes to that all my trysts would be broken and your trysts too, and you have many of them in the north and I elsewhere. We have to keep our bonds with the people in whose houses we've eaten and whose presents we've taken. And this seeming to Curithir well spoken, he kicked his dwarf out of slumber and said: Come, follow me; the day has begun and our way is northward. With the same words but without the kick Liadin awoke Brigit: Put the harp on your back and sling the bag with my singing robes over your arm and be after me quickly, for there's a long road in front of us. Brigit did as she was bid and was soon ahead of

her mistress, whose thoughts were not on the road before her but back in the pleasant covert where so much delight had come to her. And every step she took away from the place the nearer it was to her, so that to get rid of the languish that was interfering with her journey she began a cronan and a singing to herself, and it was the way that the words and the tune came unknown to her, word for word and note by note, so that she wondered. The like of this never happened to me before, she murmured, though the verses usually came easily to me; nor was the first stretch of the road they were going done with when lo! and behold you! a second and a third song came to her and she not looking for them or thinking about them at all! Other things she was thinking of. Mistress, you'll be making the king wait for the new songs you promised last year. But to Brigit's screechings Liadin gave no heed. She continued in her thoughts until they arrived at the Court, where there was a great gathering to meet her. It was proud she was that time, and when she took the harp from Brigit she made a song about love under the larches the way that everyone who heard her that night were troubled under their robes and stood gaping and gazing, every man looking at every other man's wife and every woman with her eyes at another woman's husband. Wherever she went it was the same story, from king to serving boy, men were stabbing each other in the streets, and women tearing each other's hair in the parlours, with Liadin standing by unconcerned about the mischief she was making; rejoicing maybe in the bottom of her heart, for she was wild and raging wild that she hadn't had a second night with Curithir under the larches. A year is a long time, said she, but if I kissed another man that would spoil it all, and as soon as any man tried to put a hand on her she out with a knife on him. Let you be listening to my songs, she would say, and let you be off and do the same thing

underneath the larches, but let me be, for in this world everyone keeps to their own people, the kings with the queens, the poets with the poetesses, and so on that way.

The kissing and the strife continued until the priest hearing that bad work was being done in the courts said: Ireland will go back to the devil and the druids if we don't put a stop to that one, and from that day out they gave her neither peace nor ease, but kept on talking to her, and preaching to her and barging at her about her soul that would be lasting always, and about the wasting of the flesh and the wasting of all things in the world. It was the truth they were telling her, and she did well to listen to them, for who have we but the clergy to come to us when we're on the broad of our back, on the last day, with oil to rub on our feet, and strong prayers for the resting of our souls? The time will come to you, Liadin, said the priests, when your voice will be no better than the screeching of gravel under a door, and your fine hair will be no better than seaweed, and it lank and stinking; and your teeth, if they are little itself and like the snowdrops this day, will one day be lengthy and yellow, and after that maybe there won't be a tooth in your head at all. And not a day but will see the vanishing of a bit of your beauty until there is none left, said the priest. It's that way and with them arguments they talked to her, and there was no stopping them once they began; and then you will be thinking, Liadin of the fair hair, about the mischief you did in Erie and in the world, and about your wantoning in the dry ditches in the summer nights, and the fighting and battling you set going up and down the streets of the five provinces. Repent while you've got the chance, said they, or it'll be the worse for you. What would you have me do? said she. Is it to be hanging up my harp on a nail at the back of a door, and leaving it there? she asked them. And they said: It wasn't that, but to put a good tune on the harp and to

make songs about the love of God and the glory of the holy saints and angels: that, said themselves, is what we'd have you do. But if the sort of songs you like do not come into my mind, what way will I be singing them and I thinking of other things? she asked. And that was her gait all the time, till one day a great man, Fergus by name, took his death-blow with a bill-hook in a dispute and a quarrel with another man about her singing.

It was after that she began to listen to the priest: It's a filthy, bad, black passion is in yourself, and all for another singer, a wanderer and a story-teller of your own kidney. The children you'll get that way wouldn't be saints at all but little devils, and the sins they commit will be added to your own ones for the punishment. And so they kept at her until they got the girl frightened. What would I be doing to escape the punishment? she asked, and the words warmed the priest's heart, for he knew that he'd got her tight. There is only the one, he said, and that's the vow. And she, being shook in her mind and tormented, took a vow to break with Curithir, but not content with that, the priest would have had a promise from her not to as much as see him. But she stood up to the priest at that, saying: If I have pledged a vow to meet him at the druid's stone I must keep my vow to him, and no amount of talking out of the priest could get it into her head that one vow wasn't as good as another. The priest promised that grace would come to her in a convent. But who will be getting me out of the convent when once I am inside of it? she asked, and the priest wasn't able to answer that question, so she said: No; I'll not go into a convent until I have seen Curithir, and she stuck to that. The priest in his turn answered her stiff enough that if she didn't take the pledge to see Curithir no more she would be clapt into a convent with her will or without her will; so she took the pledge of the priest with a 'bad cess to you' in her heart all the

while she was pledging herself not to keep her tryst, saying to herself: A vow that is put on a person by force is no vow at all, which is true enough, God knows. But a vow is for ever getting its grip on you like a growing disease and you're tied up well before it's done with.

Not long after that Liadin hung her harp up on the nail. And the king himself couldn't get a song out of her, no matter how much he gave. As silent as them old rocks she was in the king's hall, but when she was alone she could be heard crooning away to herself at one of the old songs. She never got to the end of any one of them, for she would start a prayer in the middle of the song, and not being able to go on with the prayer either, the tears would come rolling down her cheeks. That's the way it was with Liadin, and it was no better with Curithir. His mind was wrapped up and lost in the whiteness of Liadin's body, and that was, as I've just told you, as white and whiter than a first night's snow, and a smile would come to his lips when he remembered the red of her lips that put him in mind of the rowan berry he had seen hanging over Cummin's cell. Cummin, I must tell you, was a hermit, and he lived that time in an island on Lake Carra, no distance from Ballintubber. You know it well, your honour. As if these thoughts of Liadin were not enough, there was the track of her teeth in his neck, for she had bitten him and drew blood from him the way he would never forget her in his wanderings. The wound was sore enough, and many's the time his hand went to it, and the thought was never far away that she had rubbed some colour into it that could not be taken out no matter how many times he might wash himself in the River Shannon or any other river. He was glad of the track of her teeth in his neck, and whenever he came to a pool he stopped to admire it, saying: For all the money in the world I would not give up these tracks of her love for me. But misfortune often goes foot by foot with

fortune, and while he was thinking so much about Liadin he forgot about his stories, and as he walked the road he was always striving to catch up with them and they always fleeing before him the way the clouds fly before the wind; sometimes he thought he had gotten them again, but when he stood up to tell them there was nothing in his head but herself and nothing before his eyes, neither the king nor his court, but Liadin's face only.

The king in whose court he was, knowing nothing of these things, cried to his servants to put Curithir out of the gate, and Curithir let them do this just as a child might, often enough not knowing what they were doing to him, so taken up was he with his memories of Liadin. And when the gate was shut behind him he didn't look back but kept on walking the road, not minding what the world was saying: The great poet, Curithir, is without a story in his head, and the Lomna Druth, his dwarf, tells tales for him. He travelled ahead, wrapped up in his dreams, to the next king's court; but when he stood up in the hall before the people it was the same thing as before, he could only gaze and gape about him, and when the king said: We're tired of waiting for your story, Curithir answered: I cannot remember any story. If you've no stories to tell us, you've no business here. Put him out of the gates. As the servants were catching hold of him Curithir said: I could tell a story to you and it would be better than all the stories I've told you before this. Tell your tale, said the king. By my faith and my troth I cannot do that until I've seen Liadin. Liadin of the songs! the king answered, and Curithir said it could be no one else, and that he was waiting for the springtime to see her again.

The man is a fool, said the servants; there isn't a story in his head. What was it that happened to you, Curithir, tell us that now? The greatest luck, said he, that ever happened to a man. And he went his way cheerf

though he had nothing in the wide world, barring the memory of a night he had spent with Liadin under the boughs, and the hope in his heart that he might spend another one with her in the same place, which was a poor enough life for any man living on alms and whatever he could find. It was fairly easy while the summer lasted; it wasn't so easy when the summer wasted into autumn; and it was hard enough when the autumn dwindled into the cold weather. But Curithir knew neither time nor season until the season of love came round again, and he could say to himself: Here is the month coming when I'll see again Liadin of the beauties. And down he knelt, and he prayed that God would put the stories that he had forgotten back into his head so that he might earn enough to dress himself and be decent when he would meet her. But sure God took no notice of him; why would he indeed? and he could remember nothing but Liadin, and he kept on walking ahead, not seeing a thing in the world but springtime only. There wasn't a green branch he passed but it put him in mind of the love night that awaited him, and every bird reminded him of the same thing. He crossed from Sligo into Mayo, praying that his waiting for Liadin at the druid stone might not be long, and in Mayo his heart gave a jump and a lep, for there she was at the druid stone, and by herself, without even the servant Brigit.

She got there before me, so much does she love me, he said, stretching out his arms towards her, and he thinking, the poor man, that she would run into them. Great was his grief indeed when, instead of running to meet him, she put the druid stone between them, and kept it there while she told him, across it, all that had befallen her and how things were. Is it a dream I'm dreaming, or am I hag-ridden? he said, and will you awaken me now, unless, indeed, I'm to die where I am and as I am? God help me, Curithir, she said, I've taken

a pledge to break with you entirely. I was hard put to it to come here this day at all, and me badgered and tormented and cross-hackled the way I was. Will you hear the story of my escape from the priests? From the priests! he said, and with that he bent his face down into his hands, with nothing coming from him but now and then a moan or a groan, or a hard curse belike, while Liadin told her own story and all about the way she escaped from the priests of Corkaguiney. All that, he said, doesn't matter, and nothing matters since we are to be parted, bad luck to the ones that hate the poets, said he, and it only hardened his heart against the priests to hear her tell that Mary's own son had suffered on a cross to save the souls of men and women. All he could do was to moan out: The only soul I have is my love of you, Liadin, and the only soul you have is your love of me.

Wicked words, indeed, your honour; but the man wasn't in his mind at the time, so that he could only think of the minute he had and couldn't think at all about the eternity that was ahead of him. If you tell me any more, he said, I shall be like a tree knocked down by a big wind. Aren't all my roots snapping under me? And such is my torment that I cannot listen any longer to that kind of talk. Hold your tongue, Liadin, I tell you now, and let you be saying that you'll come after me into the forest, and stay with me there, where neither priest nor Protestant can find us, but only the squirrels and the forest cats and the small kind birds. Let you hear me out, Curithir, she replied. Didn't they take the pledge from you under a threat? he asked, and she answered: They did, indeed, and they said they would put me into a nunnery, and lock me in it unless I took the pledge; and God knows it was hard to get away from them to meet you here. But a pledge is a pledge. What are you telling me? he interrupted. Is it that we're not going to lie together under the boughs of that

larch-tree? Is it to me, with the mark of your bite, and the track of your teeth on my shoulder, that you're telling these things? And with that he commenced to cry, the creature. All that we done under the larches is done, said Liadin, for it would be flying in God's face to break a vow we have given to him. At this Curithir burst out again, and the tears dropped down on to his cloak until it was as wet as if it had been dragged in the river. Wringing wet I am with the tears you've drawn out of my eyes, but no matter the tears, and he continued like that until she came around the other side of the druid's stone to try and comfort him, and she took his hand, saying they might be marching a bit of the road together. The time hasn't come for parting yet, were her words, and it was hand in hand like that they marched on, till Curithir said: We are leaving the larch-tree behind us. Let the pair of us turn now, and go back to the larch-tree. I'll not do that, said she; and, tell me now, said she, is there a man on the top of the earth would break a vow was made to God? Said he, if I take you to a holy man, and a very holy man, will you be minded by him, and will you do as he bids you? I will, in troth. Well, then, there's a man on an island in Lough Carra, a holy man surely, for he has lived on that island by himself these fifty years. Cummin, son of Fiachna, is his name. Let us go to him now, for what better thing could the young people do than go to the old people in their trouble? Fine, the island that man lives on, not a prettier one in Ireland, with birds and beasts flying and skipping in the glades, waiting for the holy man, and they following him from his cell to his chapel as if they were his children; which they may be, for as everything that lives, the flying and the crawling and those that walk on four legs, and those that walk on two, are children of the God that made them.

Come, do not delay any longer, Liadin, for our trouble

is a bad trouble, and if there's a man in Ireland can cure us and help us that man is Cummin Mac Fiachna. Let us be off now. The walk will not be long passing by, for it's but seven miles from here to the Abbey of Ballintubber, which was built by Roderick of Connaught, as you know well. And Cummin's island is opposite the shore of Carn, the great wood; you must have heard tell of it, for the same place had a bad name for wolves. Come now with me and we'll be beside the lake, calling for Cummin to fetch us in his boat, before the sun goes down behind the Partry mountains. And so sweet was Curithir's talk that Liadin could do no less than follow him, although in her heart she knew all the time she was doing wrong. Sooner than she expected, they were passing by the skirts of the great wood and going down the hill-side and holloing across the lake for Cummin. He didn't keep them waiting. Only three times had they to shout before a boat was put out from the island, and Cummin, though he was then past seventy, could pull a good stroke as well as another, and in five minutes or less he was taking Liadin and Curithir into his boat and reading in their faces that theirs was a bad case of love. He was not minded to ask them any questions yet, but rowed on steadily till his boat was by the little quay that he had built for it. You seem in great trouble, my poor friends, he said; and they answered that that was their case, and sitting by the door of his cabin, the two of them began talking together.

Let one of you tell the story. And which shall it be? the hermit asked. Let Liadin tell it, Curithir answered, and Cummin said: I would sooner hear it from her, though I wouldn't be doubting your word either, Curithir. All the same Curithir was not pleased with Liadin's telling of the story; he thought he could have done it better himself, but he let her go on with it right to the heel, and then he went on his knees before Cummin, saying: Is

there no power on earth to take away the vow she entered into against her own free will? I say there is and that you are the man to do it. Rise to your feet, my son, Cummin said, and listen to what I'm going to tell you, and if you search your own heart you will find that I am not telling a lie nor making a mistake. We have no thought that you would be lying to us. Well, my son, not lying, perhaps, but making more of the thing than it really is. Well, I will not be doing that either, but just telling you the simple truth, which is, that from our childhood all things are passing away from us. The thoughts of our childhood die, and thoughts of boyhood enter into us; these die themselves and the thoughts of manhood get their grip; and these die after having their time. Our possessions and our health pass away from us; all things pass away from us except one thing only, for everything goes away except the love of God. Everyone comes back to the love of God just as you yourselves have done. You have come back to God with tears, with sighs, and laments about things that would leave you if you did not leave them. This leave-taking is a harder thing for the man than it is for the woman, Mac Fiachna said, for he was great at reading faces. And another word to yourself, Curithir: the bond she has entered into may lie sore upon her this day, but it will be easier on her to-morrow. Curithir looked to Liadin, thinking that she would say no to the hermit; but she stood saying nothing, her eyes cast down as if she was ashamed. You see, my son, how she stands, her eyes turned away from you and she in fear of temptation. No, Liadin cried. All you have spoken may be the truth, but that is not the truth. I do not fear temptation.

Let that be as it will be, said Cummin, I'm going to put you to the test this day, and you will see by morning that the love you think is part of yourself, and is going to last for ever and ever, and beyond this world and

through all eternity, is held to your senses the way a tree is tied to its roots, and as the tree's roots loosen so your senses will loosen; take one of these senses away and some part of your love goes off with it. You think this is not so; well, we shall see. Which of our senses will you take from us? said Curithir, and the hermit answered: I will put that question to you—which will you choose now: to see each other and not to speak, or to speak and not see each other?

Liadin and Curithir were of the one mind about that, and they said it was better to see each other and not to speak than to speak and not to see each other. The choice being that way, the hermit brought them to a hut that was cut into two rooms with a window in the middle, so that they could look in at each other. He hung a lamp in each room the way they would have light to see by, and he left his altar-boy with them to see they did not talk. Inside of five minutes they had feasted their eyes enough, and turning away from the window each cried: It is a tiresome thing and a silly thing to be gazing and not saying a word. Five minutes, am I saying? Three was more like the time that they took pleasure in each other's shapes. In three minutes they were as weary as a fish taken out of the lake might be, and he waggling at the bottom of a boat. And looking at each other, their eyes said plainly: Eyes are no good unless we may be telling what our eyes see. But they could not do this, for they had given a pledge and a vow to Cummin that they would not speak, and the altar-boy was there into the bargain. The last words they heard before the door was shut on them was the hermit telling the boy that if he closed as much as one eye he would know about it, and he be made to feel his fault with a cudgel cut from the hazel copse in front of Cummin's cell. Out of fear of the stick, not an eye did that boy close for the livelong night, and in the morning the three of them were worn out with

watching; and when the hermit came to unlock the door the words he heard were: Father, our choice was a bad one; we should have chosen to speak and not to see. Now is that so? said the hermit. You will have that test to-night, and as the pair of you have such a wish to be talking together, I'll give you, Curithir, this side of the island to regale your eyes with, and Liadin she shall have the other, and you must pledge your word to me that you will keep the trees between you both, and that there shall be no whispering through the branches. You'll have plenty of that to-night; keep your talk for the dark hours and your eyes for the light. You see, your honour, Church Island, the name it is known by to-day, is the largest island on Lake Carra, and it has about ten acres, maybe a dozen, and among the trees are tall rowans and ash and some beeches. I know the island from my boyhood, I interrupted; but go on with your story. Well, your honour, I have come to the most interesting part of it. I wouldn't be too hard upon you, Cummin said; you won't be the whole day without seeing one another. At Mass you may meet again, for I'll offer up prayers to preserve you from temptation this night that is to come, and all other nights, if you like it. My Mass will be in two hours from now, and, until then, I shall be praying for you both, and praying for myself and for the rest of the world, for it is the world needs our prayers to save it from God's anger, he being distressed at the wickedness that is going on among you from year's end to year's end.

Listen, both of you, now, to what I am saying. For the next two hours I'll be saying my prayers, and after that I'll be reading the Mass that you are to hear in the chapel, and after that I'll be in my cell, beautifying the scrolls, the missal I am painting, my present to the Abbot of Ballintubber, to whose kindness I am indebted for this comfortable island. I cannot be away from my work an afternoon if I would finish it this year; and while I

am at work, weaving garlands and finding nooks and corners for the birds and the weasels and the squirrels and badgers and the foxes of my little domain, my cat will be watching for mice as patient as myself. I am telling you this, for I wish you both to imitate me and my cat, each on different sides of the island.

It's a hard test and a cruel one you're putting us to this day, said Curithir, for we are two young people and you are an old man. That is true, Cummin answered him. The old forget a great deal of youth's needs and feelings, and it is truer still that the young know nothing at all of what the old people are thinking. You see, Curithir, Liadin makes no complaint, and he asked Curithir why he didn't take example by her, but the tears were flowing down Curithir's cheeks one after the other as rain falls from the eaves, and there was no voice in him, so thick were his sighs. Away with you now, the hermit cried, and let each keep to his and to her side of the island, and any transgressions will be reported to me by my little altar-boys. As he said these words Cummin fixed his eyes upon them, and the sight of Liadin's calm and contrite looks satisfied him that the bond would not be broken by her; and he pitied Curithir, for he knew what was passing in Curithir's heart better than he did what was passing in the woman's, being a man himself, and he said: Life is bitter to him now but the bitterness will pass and what was once bitter will become sweet, but if I let them go their gait what was once sweet will turn to worse bitterness. And Curithir, who understood the hermit's mind, kept saying to himself, as he walked by the lake shore: 'Tis the old that make life bitter for the young, and they make it betimes so bitter that the young would escape from them through death's door. But there was no courage in him to divide himself from Liadin, which wasn't the same with Liadin, whom Curithir could see between the trees betimes sitting

on a rock, looking across the lake. Thinking of what? he asked himself, but he dared not call out to her for fear the little boys might hear and tell on him. Will she have the courage to drown herself, which I haven't today, though talking with Liadin without seeing her may be no better enjoyment than feasting my eyes on her without speaking; and he wished the lake to rise up and carry them away, for living, he said, is bitter as a sloe, and he cast one out of his mouth. Will this day never end? he asked; and, moaning, walked the shore, till at last the hermit's bell summoned them to his cell.

So, the hermit said, you have chosen to speak but not to see each other? And he drew a curtain across the window and left them with the altar-boy, who was told to report if either peeped from behind the curtain. But without sight of each other they wearied of talking almost as soon, but not quite as soon, as they had wearied of gazing at each other. They wearied all the same, and though now and again they woke up from a doze and began talking again they were as unhappy the second day as they were the first.

Lad, the hermit said, have you waked or slept? And the lad answered: I may have dozed a bit, Father, but should have heard them, and the hermit looked at the curtain, and seeing it as he had left it, said: Now, my children, tell me, isn't human love, as I said it was, different in this from the love of God, that we can love God without sight of his face or the sound of his voice? And Curithir, answering Cummin, said he would not endure another night of talking without sight or sight without talking. And is it the same with you, my daughter? the hermit asked. But Liadin did not answer him, and he said: Praise be to the great God, she has passed beyond temptation already. She has thrown the tempter out of herself, and you must strive, my son, to do likewise. Tell me, the hermit continued, turning to the

woman, is it the way I've said? and she answered: It is just as you have said. I could bear a harder test than the one you gave us; I could indeed, and I could lie without sin beside Curithir there from dusk to dusk. Without temptation rising up within you? the hermit asked. Without any temptation that I could not throw out easily. Liadin, Liadin, that such words should have come from you, Curithir cried, turning his face aside, and her cruel talk brought such tears to his eyes that the hermit was sorry for him. You would be putting a great test upon yourself, my daughter, for the flesh is strong in the night-time and the spirit weakens towards morning. But to know if you speak truly, and have put temptation well away, I'll let you lie with Curithir. Curithir covered his face with his hands to keep the hermit from seeing his joy. The hermit's eyes were upon Liadin, and he said: I wouldn't put you in doubt or danger, my child, but I'll do this to give you a chance of earning greater glory by holding out, and for that reason, and to give you good help, I'll make my altar-boy sleep between you. On hearing these words Curithir's happiness turned to as great sorrow, and he was near running to the lake to drown himself, but, catching sight of Liadin's face, he held his breath. Was this a trick of hers? he asked himself. Had she a spell to put on the boy so that he would sleep like a top, and would neither see nor hear them, and they crossing over to each other in the night? And feeling that it would be better to have a little patience, for he would know all these things later on, he said no word but followed Cummin to the hut.

What happened to them, your honour? You may guess that when I tell you that in the morning they were waked by the little boy crying to them, saying: Look now at the trouble you've shoved me into, for yonder is our father cutting a stick in the hazel copse to beat me if I refuse to tell him the truth. But you'll be helping me

out of this trouble, for the one that gets the pleasure should get the pain. Before Curithir could answer him, the door was opened by the hermit, who began to read their faces, and being almost sure he had read them truly, he turned to the boy, saying: You see this stick? This stick is for you, and not a whole inch of hide will I leave on your back unless you tell me the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, for I think there was bad work done in this place last night. Cummin was, as I've said, seventy at this time, and the boy could have cast him to the ground, but there isn't a boy in Ireland, God be praised, that would raise his hand to a priest, for one is never sure that he mayn't have the sacred elements about him somewhere. It matters little to him if he tells you the truth, Curithir said, for if he opens his lips to tell lie or truth I will have his life. At this the boy began to weep, and Cummin answered that he should not have put this great trial upon them, but what has happened cannot be undone, he said, and the fault is with the man; so come with me, Curithir, and I'll put you on the shore with a letter in your pocket that you'll take to the holy father in Rome; he may be able to shrive you for the sins you've committed last night, which is more than I can do for you. Go to him at once with all speed, make your way to Rome lest God take you in your sin and plunge you into hell for the entertainment of the big devils that dwell below. And while you're walking to him I will be praying for your soul and for the soul of the poor woman beside us the way she won't be lost for ever if she repents and if you repent of your deceiving ways. Sorra deceiving, said Curithir, and you might have known what would happen. We won't argue that, said Cummin: get you into the boat. And you, he said to the altar-boy, stay here with the woman until I return. Get you into the boat, he said again, for Curithir was loth to leave Liadin. But he dared not disobey the hermit, and

Cummin laying himself to the oars like a young man, God putting a strength into him that wasn't natural, so that in a few minutes the keel was grating on the sand beyond. Out of my boat with you now, and do penance for your sins and pray that the holy father may shrive you, but never let me see your face on this island again, not till your beard be whitened and all the wickedness gone out of your heart.

Cummin took up his oars again and in a few minutes he was back to the island, and what do you think was the first thing he saw? Liadin lying in the lake, dead and drowned, where she had fallen from a rock, she having climbed it to try to see the last of Curithir. This is a bad day for all of us, the hermit murmured to himself, and taking the boy by the scruff of the neck he beat him severely, saying: Take this and take that, for it's through your fault the woman is dead and drowned and maybe in hell at this moment, unless the great God in his mercy knows that she repented before she tumbled into the water. Now be off with you, you limb, he said, and all the rest of the day he was busy digging a grave.

And it is in that grave that Liadin is lying to this day, with the rowan-tree growing over her, for all that man could say to the differ. And for the hind end of the story I've to tell that long after Cummin was dead Curithir came back, old and broken with travelling the world. As he came through the great woods to the lake the people didn't know him, and nobody in all Ireland knew him to be the great poet Curithir who had gained such glory for himself in the courts of kings. He was white and ragged, for age and wolves had hunted him, and he had barely escaped with his life, and would not have done that if maybe the God above him had not wished him to stand at Liadin's grave. Is there no hermit at all on the island? he asked. Not a one at all, they told him; that island is as empty as a tin can with a hole in it, but the

hermit's boat is beyond still. He got into the boat and laid to the oars, and he found the grave after much searching for it, and when he did find it he lay down beside it, saying: Well, I've come to my mearing. There he breathed his soul away, and the hermit, looking down, prayed such a prayer for him that God could not choose but hear. As he did not come back the villagers sought him out on the island, and they dug a grave and stretched him in it, and not many years afterwards the rowan-trees planted above the grave reached across one to the other, their branches getting together and intertwining as a token of the great love that was lying under their berries, that were red as Liadin's lips. Her lips were like that, as red as the rowan berry. That is the end of my story, maybe it wasn't too long, your honour. Your story, Alec, I said, is to my mind a beautiful relic of the Middle Ages, as lovely as the Tara Brooch, and like the brooch it brings back Ireland to me, the vanished Ireland, the Ireland of my dreams. How long ago do you think it was that Liadin met Curithir by this stone? I've often asked myself that question, your honour, but from what I remember, and from what my father used to be saying that his father said, it was long ago indeed. It might be a thousand years ago.

And then in the pleasant, resinous odour of the larch-trees, that a random breeze flying in and out of the wood carried towards us, and in the hum of the bees making for their hive, and in a consciousness of the beauty of the long grass waving in the wind, Trusselby and I talked of ancient Ireland as well as we knew how, myself prompting him with memories of what I had picked up in conversation with Kuno Meyer and Trusselby falling back on what he heard from his father and his grandfather of what Ireland had been: A country of great loneliness; of monks who had monasteries everywhere, and who sat in their cells beautifying the gospels

with ornamented scrolls, filling them in with strange, wonderfully drawn patterns, garlands of leaves and wreaths, with nooks and corners for the birds and the squirrels. That part of the story, Trusselby, in which the hermit tells Liadin and Curithir how he will sit in his cell continuing the illumination of the gospels, as patiently as his cat waits for the mice, is delightful. May God rest his soul, father used to tell it the same as I am after telling it to you, and he got it from his father, Trusselby answered.

It may have been the perfumed shade of the larches and the murmur of the long grass that won my thoughts out of the present till I looked into the Ireland that was before the Danes came—a quiet, sunny land, with trees emerging like vapours, with long herds wandering through the haze, watched over by herdsmen. In that land all was a dream for beast and herdsman; for the monks in their cells patiently illuminated the gospels with strange device while their cats waited patiently for the mice behind the wainscoting. A brooding, sacred peace reigned over the land that I looked into; and I understood that in those halcyon days Ireland lay immersed in a religious dream that the world never knew before or since, without stirs or sign of danger except when a galley's prow showed in the estuaries. And for a long time the Danish pirates ravaged only the coast-lands. A land of forests and of marshes with green uplands, I said aloud, and Trusselby, as though he had been dreaming my dream, answered: One half of this land must have been no better than a big bog, and worse than a bog, sir, a marsh full of reeds and bitterns with ducks by the million. And snipe, I said. And we fell to talking of the great snipe-shooting in Ireland at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Trusselby could tell of many great shots. The best was a Mr. Keyes, the same gentleman that had two thoroughbred stallions snorting round the

country in your own time, your honour. It was a bad day he didn't bring home his forty or fifty brace. My father, Trusselby, was a good snipe shot, and he told me that many a time he brought home fifty-nine and a half birds, but he could never get the thirty brace. I wouldn't be saying a word against your own father, God be his rest, Mr. Moore, but I've heard from my father that Mr. Keyes often brought back fifty. There isn't much left of our forests now, and one time they covering all the Burren mountains. It was Cromwell, bad cess to him, that downed the timber, for it gave shelter to the ones that would be rising and striking a blow for Ireland. I don't know, Trusselby, when the last wolf was shot in Ireland; somewhere in the seventeenth century, wasn't it? Aye, the wolves went off when the trees went off. In those days Ireland was the land of trees, I've heard my father say, and his father before him told the same story. There was many a strip left here and there of the old forests in his time, but there's not much left of them now.

We fell to talking of the wolves, and how hard it must have been for the ancient folks to protect their flocks. Sure they hadn't that trouble: hadn't we the finest wolf-hounds in the world, your honour, and plenty of them too? The Irish wolf-hound was a subject on which we were both eager to talk, myself having heard that the last of the true breed were seen at Westport House about 1825 or 1830. After that the breed was allowed to die out, and what they had been doing since to revive it was but a mockery. Great Danes crossed with Russian deer-hounds; there might be a touch of the mastiff too, and very like in appearance to the old wolf-hound they be, your honour, but I wouldn't trust them to go against a wolf—no, nor against a good strong fox. How did we get the wolf-hound? Did we breed him ourselves? We did that, but I'm not saying that we didn't help the strain

by blood from beyond in the Pyrenees, where wolves are as plentiful as nuts. For another thing, my father used to be saying that the monks that lived at Bregen were fair destroyed by the wolves. I mean their flocks, your honour, not themselves, for the wolf is a cowardly creature, and unless he's got the other ones with him he wouldn't dare look at a man. It's the innocent sheep them fellows do be digging their jaws into, and it isn't until the whole flock be torn and mangled that they get off with themselves into the forests, and up and away among the hills that you see around us now. The same hills used to be all scrub and forest, and there's plenty of hiding in the holes of the rocks for them fellows, and they with tails like a pot-hook, and with pointy ears and long, snouty chaps to their jaws, and up and down them jaws teeth, be God, that would give you the jigs to look at, all sizes and sorts, terrible once they get inside the flesh, like Micky Murphy's big cross-saw when himself and his brother do be pulling at it, Micky in the pit and Pat above on the balk: only the saw cuts cleaner; the wolves snap and snatch away, that's the way they fight, snatching and tearing until the bit comes out, not like the dog, that holds on to his bite. But the dog is quick to learn, and what made the Irish hound a great fighter was the same snapping trick that he got off the wolves.

You were telling, Alec, about some hounds that came over from the Pyrenees. I'll be at the story presently, your honour, or maybe it would do me as well to go on where I left off. And where was that? I disremember it now. You were telling about the destruction of the flocks belonging to the monks that lived at Bregen. I was, indeed, your honour; they were terribly cut about by the wolves, and the monks lost their best hounds in the fighting that was always going on. There was only an old bitch left, and they without a dog to line her on account of a falling out they had with the king about a

piece of land. Whilst they were telling each other about their losses, and planning snares and pitfalls, what do you think but there came into the Abbot's mind the thought of a young Irish monk who had left Ireland a while before that to teach Latin and Greek to the folk beyond there in the Pyrenees. I wouldn't give a rotten nut, says he, for the snares they do be setting. There isn't a wolf will go into them, except an odd one, and it blind with old age or hard of the hearing, or without a smell in his nose. Far better it would be to send a letter to the Pyrenees asking the Abbot beyond if he has a few hounds he could be sparing, or a pup maybe. He won't like to part with his dogs, though he had them from us a matter of ten years ago, so it's only fair if he gives us a few of the pups to pull us through. He did that. The French Abbot told them in a letter that he was sending three dogs to Bregen bred from the stock that had come to them from Ireland; each of the three, he said, was a match for a wolf. Mind you, it's a good dog will face the wolf and the pair of them all alone.

The monk he was sending with the dogs was Marban, a young fellow of the Gael that had gone to the Pyrenees with his share of the Latin and the Greek the way he'd be teaching. The Abbot had to send him, for nobody could travel easy in Ireland, and they not knowing the language of the country. How long would your honour say it would be from this place to the Pyrenees? About a thousand miles, Alec, I'm thinking. And a thousand miles, with three dogs under your hand, Alec answered, would be a journey of about a couple of months if he came through the Frenchmen's country. Which is not at all likely, I rapped out. It's more likely he took ship at Bordeaux and landed at Waterford. Waterford itself is a good step from the county of Mayo. Alec interjected: It is; it's a long, weary walk, and it's full of dangers. A man might easily lose himself in the forests at that

time. My grandfather was never tired of talking of Ireland in the days gone by, and of the forests that were everywhere except where there were bogs. Some of the hills were free from trees, of course, or the people wouldn't have been able to live at all, for they hadn't a thing barring the sheep and the cattle, just like now. Perhaps there's no part of the world that is changed less than Ireland herself. In those times there were four great roads, one running from north to south, and another going from east to west, and the people were divided between the ones that lived in the monasteries and the ones that drove the cattle from this pasture to the next one. Over the lot of them were a few warriors who rode in chariots. The houses were made of wood, and that's why there's none of them left now. They were all burned or battered down by the foreigner. Has your honour ever been to the Arran Islands to see the big fort? And, mind you, that was built before Patrick came, when the men were pagans.

Well, putting it all together, it was no easy time young Marban had, doing his twenty miles a day, for if he did less than that the wolves wouldn't have left a sheep in the county of Mayo. So he struggled on, thinking about the monks that were losing their flocks, asking his way from this monastery to the next one, and sometimes holloing for an advice to the wild lads on the hills, and getting, perhaps, only half an answer from them. Many's the time he must have lost himself between forest and bog, and it was only the best of good luck or the providence of God itself that got him across the Shannon. After crossing it he had to ask his way through the county of Roscommon, a fine big county, and Mayo is a fine big county too, and Bregen wasn't many miles from where we are now sitting. He must have had a hard time, eating berries out of his hand, and the dogs themselves picking up whatever was going in the way

of a stray rabbit or a hare, and in that way Marban and his dogs came out at day-fall from a great wood in West Mayo. In front of him there was a marsh covered with wild-fowl, and more coming in at every minute: every kind of duck; gulls would be there too. Faith, they're in it still and plenty of them, but there was more then, and herons and bitterns were as common as children are now. 'Tis a lonesome place a marsh at the close of day, and the boom of the bittern would put a traveller's heart crossways, and he listening to it in the dusk. I believe there were bears, too, in Ireland; and 'tis said the hug of a bear makes pudding of a man's insides. Bears are not partial to flesh, they like berries better, and that's a queer thing for such a bulky lad, but there isn't an animal that came out of Noah's Ark that dislikes being interfered with or meddled with more than a bear does. At the time of Marban's arrival, I'll be bound the deer were skipping down to the rivers to drink, but I needn't be wasting my breath on these things, it's only that I'd like you to hear the story the way I heard it.

Well, as Marban was going back to the wood, wishing to tie up his dogs to a tree and make himself as easy as he could up in the fork of a bough, he saw a light, and after following it for some time he said: Maybe that isn't a natural light at all. Maybe that is a will-o'-the-wisp that will lead me to my destruction. He was wrong there; it wasn't to his destruction the will-o'-the-wisp led him, but to his safety, if you can call it that when you've heard the story out, but God knows what might have happened to him if he had done the night in that wood.

When he was going back into it he caught sight of another light, and he said: That looks a better one, that's a fine steady light; that's the light from a window, and wherever there's a window there's a door, and wherever there's a door there's a roof, and wherever there's a roof there's a bed; and for this night any sort of bed will do

me. But the poor man didn't know the sort of bed he was going to, he was that full of hope, and every step he took he said to himself: No doubt at all but it's a house I'm walking to this minute, or it's a monastery, or maybe it's the court of a king. He tried to remember who were the kings in Mayo, but he had been so long out of the country that he couldn't think of their names. Well, said he, small the thing whether I sleep in a castle or a nunnery, or the court of a king this night, if only I can put a bit into my own mouth and the mouths of the pups here; and if I get a pillow underneath my head I'll be well contented. I need no more and ask no more. God be praised, I'm saved; I am so, glory be to God, he cried, and he hit a thump on the gate.

It was at the third knock that the Mother Abbess poked her head out of a window, and not three minutes afterwards there were three other heads poking out of other windows. Good, decent women they are, and of my own race, the monk said. They won't be grudging me the bit to eat and the sup that washes it down. He wasn't wrong there, for as soon as the Abbess heard his story and his tale she bid him wait till she had got some clothes on her back. We've been in bed, young youth, this half-hour, she said; but I'll let you in. When she had slung a cloak on she opened the door and let himself and his dogs in, and she saying: The blessing of God on yourself and on these three fine dogs that are sniffing at my feet this minute. Badly they're wanted. The boys up the hill will be glad to have them three the way the wolves have been making havoc and destruction amongst the flocks. There isn't a flock left in the country, my son, not a shepherd but has his share, some of them two, and some of them three, and some of them the good half of a flock, but with the help of God and these three fine dogs, we'll have mutton to our bread on Sundays and holidays and odd times as well. We haven't tasted much

meat lately, but here's a bit left, she continued, from last night, and we depriving ourselves of it, little thinking that you would be wanting it more than we do after your long travel, my poor young man. Was it Marban you said you were called? A good name it is surely in this country.

Such was her canter while she cut the bread and poured him out a noggin of ale. We don't drink ale ourselves, she said, but we have it for strangers, the ones that do be wanting it. While talking she kept on looking at the lad, taking stock of his size and his shape, and from what father told me and what he heard from his father before him, Marban was a fine young fellow when he was in it, a long-legged lad with spreading shoulders to him, with red lips, and a mouthful of teeth as white and as strong as the ones inside the faces of his hounds that were already stretched and snoring by the hearth, too tired for even their feed.

She seemed to be well pleased with the traveller, and kept on putting questions to him about himself and the ways of the monastery he had left behind in foreign parts. She wasn't a woman you would be calling young, and she wasn't an old woman either: a youngish woman falling into flesh as the roses will be doing in a month's time, when they open out like small cabbages. She only had a few clothes on, being in a hurry to open the door to him, one of the long blue cloaks you might have seen worn by the married women when you were a boy, and it slipped on over the gown she'd gone to bed in. Well, she was so full of the lad eating at her table that she had no heed of herself, more often than not showing herself away up her legs and down into her bosom, puzzling the young monk, who did not know how to let on he wasn't taking notice of her. You will understand how this was right well, your honour, when I tell you that one of the questions she was haggling at was the distance

between his monastery and the nearest nunnery; and great was her surprise when she heard that there wasn't a nunnery closer to him than twenty miles. Sure that's ridiculous, said she. How do you be getting your temptation? said she. Tell me that now, said she. What good are we doing here if we be not overcoming strong temptations? she said. And barring the women, what temptations are there in this world for monks who have the height of eating and drinking, and aren't called away to fight for any king? There aren't any, said she. And the young man not answering her, she went on that way all the time, until at last, by dint of arguing, she got him to fall in with her way of thinking instead of the one he was used to, and he told her that all she said seemed to be true enough, and that the sticking of yourself into the way of temptations so that you'd get a prize for standing out against it used to be practised in the monastery of the Pyrenees long ago, but had been reneged by the Church because lots of the folk hadn't been able to shove back the temptation quick enough to save their souls from the danger. But as I've been telling ye, the Mother Abbess answered him: What good is it to be living at all if it isn't to be overcrowding the devil? And if a few should fall back into his claws, isn't that their own sin and their own folly and their own look-out? Is there to be no thought for the ones that be striving to get a place up in heaven and they not having any longer the ways and means, temptation having been forbidden by the Church? 'Tis a poor thing, I say, and a hard thing when the strongest are held back by the weakest, and the fine places in heaven are empty, there being no person to win them.

As the remark came the door opened and Sister Blathnat came, and she so tidily dressed that the Mother Abbess couldn't keep her tongue quiet and snapped out that she had been too long delaying to bid the stranger

welcome. And when will the rest of the sisters be coming in? They'll be here, Sister Blathnat answered, inside a minute or two minutes. And strange things they will be hearing when they do come. And when all had forgathered the Abbess repeated all the monk had just told her: that there wasn't a nunnery with a female in it within twenty miles of his monastery in the Pyrenees, and that they didn't want one, it having come to pass that a man is forbidden to put himself into temptation for fear he might be bet. Did you ever hear the like of that story before, Sister? And isn't it the great nonsense? As I was telling Brother Marban here, our work in the world is the overcoming of the devil, and if we aren't at it all our lives, what chance is there for us to get a place in heaven at all, to say nothing of a fine easy one?

Sister Blathnat was a tall, sloping woman, with soft eyes, such as one sees in a deer. Her hair was like silk, brown with a yellow shine in it, and the longest legs a woman ever had, measuring them from the knee to the ankle, and wonderfully sweet were they, the sort that would stir up the heart of any man to be at her. And she gained great advancement with her legs, moving them while she spoke, her eyes fixed on the monk, crossing and uncrossing them as she'd a right to do, for all this was her business, and his business was to think of our Lord Jesus, who had died for him on the cross, and she too would have to think of the same thing, and be saying prayers while all this was going on. The nun sitting beside her, Sister Muirgil, was a small woman, with round, inquisitive eyes, which she kept raising and lowering as if she'd set the monk thinking that it might be harder for him if he were put to it to resist her than Sister Blathnat. After her there came another nun, Sister Brigit, a thin woman that at first sight you might be taking for a girl, so rosy were her cheeks, and the finest head of hair she had in the county of Mayo, it ringletting

about her neck like the ferns in May, and her eyes were kindly, yet she was in no way good-looking, barring that she made a fine shape through her gown. Other men found that they were better helped up the difficult way to heaven by Sister Eorann, a girl as brown as a berry she was, with crinkly hair and merry eyes and with much pleasant talk. She was the last but one to get out of bed and come down, and Marban guessed that she was someone in the nunnery, for she joined in with the Mother Abbess, interrupting her telling Marban that God allowed the devil to test men with temptations, but measuring these always to their strength. The women, said she, are the best temptation of all the temptations; everybody knows that, and it is only the great and good, the ones that are worthy of high places in the kingdom of heaven, that can resist the women without going to the tub. The monks from Crith Gaille come down and they stretch beside us as quiet and gentle as lambs beside their yoes, and no evil in them at all. Of course they are burning all the while, and well they may, but it is only by burning here that we escape the burning and the blazes of hell. Is it not the same with you women? Brother Marban asked. And the Mother Abbess answered him: It's the same for us as for them. Burning we do be, and mighty uneasy, for are we not always tempting each other, and together overcoming our temptations, thereby winning great rewards? 'Tis like going up the ladder, we begin at the lowest step and end at the top one. For myself, being forty years of age, the young men lie with me, who, though no longer young, am still able to stir their blood; but the old monks lie with the sisters until they contrive power over themselves and great resistance to any of us. Any, Sister Blathnat said, except Sister Luachet, who hasn't yet lain with a man. The Abbot, said the Abbess, picking her up, will lie with Sister Luachet if he recovers from the sickness that is on him. He's very sick,

the poor man, and he's as old as the hills. It will be his last temptation. He'll not be long with us, and I'd like to have him high up in heaven, ready to receive us all when the time of temptations is over and done with.

The talk went on about Sister Luachet till she came into the room, and when she came in the monk saw the prettiest girl he ever did see. Her hair was the colour of the corn before the reaper goes in with his sickle, and her eyes were well set in her head, and round and blue and pleading, and her shape was pretty throughout. Small breasts she had, and straightened flanks, and round thighs, and ankles as pretty as a young donkey's. She had a live smile on her face, something that put one in mind of a bird and of a flower, and of pleasant harmless things. The Mother Abbess told Luachet to strip herself, so that Marban might see what a trial she would be to the devil in times to come, and she winning high places in heaven for the monks, and he not getting one monk of the monks for his realm below. Isn't that so, my little Luachet? said she, and the girl clapped her hands, saying: It is, Mother; I'll be making saints and saving saints in the times to come. The Mother Abbess continued her canter: But we'll wait till she fades a little, the girl, before we allow her to lie with the monks at Bregen, only with the Abbot himself if he comes out of the sickness, and it will take little Luachet to stir up a flame in him, poor old man, and he seventy-five if he's a day, so that he may win a place in heaven will do honour to Ireland. And now, the Reverend Mother continued, slip into your gown, child, and your cloak, for the night is chilly. In the Pyrenean monastery, the place this man comes from, there is no nunnery within twenty miles, and the monks live there without temptation from a woman year's end to year's end, eating their fill and drinking their load, but not a chance nor the ghost of a chance for them to conquer themselves.

Strange ways the Church has fallen into, and strange times for the world. Ah! it's only in holy Ireland, I'm thinking, that the saints are still living.

Mother, interrupted Brother Marban, in the South the blood is hotter than it is in the North. Ah! the Mother Abbess grunted; true for you. It's in holy Ireland only that strength is given to man to best temptation, and now, for it's getting late, which of us is going to lie with Brother Marban to-night, and he not having had a temptation to strive with for this long while back? Any one of you might strike up a flare in that kind of flesh. Brother, though you do look like a virtuous and a holy young man, I'll lie with you myself this night, for I'm older and wiser and better able to be staunch if the devil tries to cut any capers beyond the ones that we expect from him and are used to. We've managed to keep him out of this place up to now, so don't be worried or frightened, for he won't pass the doors and windows, sprayed as they are with holy water, nor will he try the chimney, for the vane itself is the form and shape of a holy cross, protection enough. Maybe you have an extra crucifix handy, Mother, said Marban, and there is great virtue in that indeed. I have, she answered. I will put this one round your neck, the way you'll hold it in your hand and be kissing it while you're in the bed, for that's what will give you courage to hold out against the temptation. And now, my children, good-night to the lot of you, she said to the other nuns. Out with you, and leave me here to my trouble with this young man.

When she had the door shut behind them she came over to Marban and told him to kneel down alongside herself and say a prayer; so they did that, but she prayed so long that the boy thought his knees would break away from under him. Tender you do be about the knees when you're young. First he lifted up one knee and then he lifted up the other one and there wasn't the

smell of a prayer left in him when the nun got up with a grunt and gave her leg a shake. Now, said herself, we'll be getting into bed. Do you begin to strip, and I'll not be long behind you.

The young man was in travelling dress, and there were boots to be unlaced, and brooches to be unhooked, and many other things, and while he was laying his clothes aside and folding them up, he had his back to the Abbess, for he wasn't used to this kind of thing; but she had little on her, barring the cloak and the shift, and when the cloak was off she says to him: Now, Brother Marban, none of this dodging your lawful temptations; turn round here and take a look at me and don't be afraid, for God will give you grace to resist me. He found she was very like what he thought she would be, like one of those big cabbage roses, all pink and white, thick about the thighs, too big in the belly for sightliness, or, as they say, beef to the heels like a Mullingar heifer. But a fine woman all the same, and when they were side by side together, she gave him a prod and said she again: Face round here to your temptations, and face them bravely, for your guardian angel is always beside you. But, says he, if the devil should be stronger in me and overcome the angel? You mustn't talk like that, she said. The monks in the monastery above would come down here and drive you out into the wilderness with clouts of a stick if they thought—— They'd kill me, he interrupted. I wouldn't go as far as to say that, she said, but they would do a damage to you, and they'd have no further truck with you. The wilderness is a bad place at night, the way it's so full of bears and wolves. Be thinking of that now and you're safe. But you mustn't be thinking of the other things, for everything comes out of your head, and if you don't let the thought into your head, you're as safe as I am. You're quiet enough as it is. There's nothing to fear, my good boy, and the nun passed her hand over

him, and finding him slack everywhere, she said: There's not much temptation in you, young man, so let you lie now in my arms, and look into my eyes, and whatever temptation there may be about will rise up and you have the chance to scoop it out of yourself.

If I get away from this place with my life, said the young man to himself, they won't catch me here again for ever, and I won't stop running either until my feet give out, and until there are nine twisting miles of scrub between myself and themselves here in this house of God. The monks up yonder would be hard men with no pity in them for them that tumble. God be praised that I did my forty miles this day through tough country, and me with three healthy dogs pulling out of me, for the same journey would leave the sinfullest man with little humour for a bit of tallow at the end of it, to say nothing of a cleric and he guaranteed by the grace of God. But never a word of all this to the nun that was in his arms, and she thinking that nothing but the power of God could make him so like a dish-cloth. You've conquered your temptation before you came here, said she. But we must find a better one to rouse you. The devil a one here will do that, said the lad to himself. At daybreak I'm away to the monastery, and maybe I'll be safer there.

CHAP. XIX.

HE was asleep the minute after the door closed behind her, and he didn't rouse or budge until the sun was high up in the heavens and the nuns had been knocking at his door more times than once. Nor was it till the third or fourth knock that he opened his eyes, but at the fifth or the sixth; and seeing the sun that strong in the room, he said to himself: I'm done for; I've slept it out. I'll be kept here by the women, and if I'm fresh and vigorous, and lying with one of the younger ones in the night

that's coming, the lord will be put to the pin of his collar to save me from the devil. I'd do well to kiss the crucifix, said he, and dragged on his clothes, for he could hear a gathering of them beyond his door, and thinking they might be coming in upon him, he bounced out into the very middle of them and very soon Sister Eorann was stuck on him like a burr. You remember, your honour, the almost crooked little figure with crinkly hair and grey eyes, a babbling little nun, that was soon telling Marban to his face of his grand success last night. As quiet as a lamb you were, said the mother to me, and you inside her arms and well in, and that we'd have our work cut out to work a temptation in you. But it's grand work, indeed, getting the better of the devil.

Before Marban could answer her she was telling him the story of their nunnery: how a hundred years ago Suibhne MacCalmain, king of Dal Ariadhe, was mad and distracted by a great sickness that was on his wife, and no one could cure her, though all the wise women in Connaught had been by her bed-side giving her every kind of medicine, and no good coming to her out of it. Sorra one of them could tell what was the matter with her, only that she was wasting away, and she was no more than a dead bird at the bottom of a cage with its legs poked up when MacCalmain came running out of the house to throw himself into the river and drown himself therein. On the way he met three nuns, and said they to the king: Where are you off to, MacCalmain? I'm off to throw myself into the water. What's that for? said they. It's to drown myself, said he; for the wife is dead, said he, or she's dying on me. How do you make that out? said a nun of the nuns, and MacCalmain said: There's hardly a grip of her left. All the same, said the nuns, her life isn't done with yet. How is that? said the king. What do you mean by that? said he. Do you not know, said the nun, that the angels are gathering this

minute of the minutes above there in the clouds, blue and white they be, to bear her soul to God? I know that same, said the king; I know it well. Good for you, MacCalmain, said the nun. And tell me this now, said she: Do you want to separate yourself from herself for ever? Is that it? Separate myself from herself, it is not that, said he; and he stood gazing and gaping without a word in him. As soon as he got hold of a few odd words he said that he was off to his drowning in the river because he couldn't live without her. Live! said a nun of the three nuns. We don't live on this earth at all, it's a dream; our own life is heaven itself, close to the Lord God, and he in the middle of the holy saints. Come away from the river, MacCalmain, and pray to have your sins forgiven and you to be restored to your wife when she's wearing a better crown than the one you gave her. Don't say a word against the crown, says the king, for he was a proud man, and he got the crown made himself; but all the same the words of the nun struck him as being wise words, and he was going off to do their bidding when one of the three nuns called him back. We are going to pray to God the way you'll get back your wife. Do that same, said he, for heaven itself would be a poor place to me if I couldn't plant my seat alongside the seat of Etain, the one I gave my crown to and my heart, and all my wishes and my wants. And now tell me, he said, since you understand these things so well, will he be giving her to me plump and hearty, the way she was last year, or will she be all skin and bone, the way she is this year? A foolish question, to be sure, but the man was ruined with the grief, and even the holy faces of the nuns, and they looking sideways at him, could only pacify him bit by bit, until the truth came to him that life on this earth is no more than a shadow of the long life that's stored up for us in heaven. If it's that way, said he to himself, the less I think about earth the better, for I'm getting on

and there can't be many more years in front of me. But if I get to heaven I'll have an eternity with Etain, and that's a long time. So here goes for Etain.

With that he gave up the kingdom and went and joined the hermits that do be in the wilderness, passing his kingdom over to his brother Guaire and giving the nuns a whacking lump of his forests and glebe for the building of a nunnery, they bargaining to be offering up prayers, and good ones, so that he might meet his wife, her body and soul, in heaven. It wasn't long after that he began to study the Latin, and as soon as he had enough of the tongue to get through Mass they made a priest out of him, and with his cassock on his back he was the proud man, thinking small, rough potatoes of his brother Guaire, the new king. You have a soft silk shirt on you like I used to wear when I was a king and a sinner, but my cassock scratches my skin, making many a sore place, but every one of these scabs will be lifting me up nearer and nearer to the blessed Etain, and she, if it's the will of God, a saint among the saints. Whereupon the two brothers went up to where the nuns were building, and MacCalmain put off his cassock and dug into the work of collecting wattles and driving in stakes with a hammer, and Guaire watching him, wishing to do the same, but of course he couldn't, for that's no king's job. But he was proud of the brother all the same, and he thought a lot of the nuns too. Great women were the nuns of old Ireland, content at first with little enough, a church, a refectory, a kitchen, a library, a workshop, a guest-chamber maybe, and to get these built, great labour was needed. My father was apt at telling a story how St. Patrick, going the road from Mayo to Ulster, cried like a baby when he saw the blood on the woodsmen's hands, the tears rolling down his cheeks in two great streams. The nuns would never have been able to clear the land of forest if MacCalmain had not asked his brother Guaire

to send up help; sure, they couldn't do it. The nuns, he said, haven't time to say as much as a prayer, and my poor wife and I are lonely one for the other, she away there in heaven and I where I am in this place. Send these nuns good help the way they'll get their building finished and be able to say their prayers. The wife may be in purgatory yet for all we know. Send up some good help, Guaire, and we'll all get a prayer said for us against the time we'll be in purgatory, for there will all of us be sooner or later, this day or the next, and God knows for how long.

All that I'm telling your honour Marban heard from Eorann, and when his turn came to speak he said: You've heard, Sister, that in heaven there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage. We read the same words in the gospels, Eorann answered, but it is the Abbot beyond explains hard things to the laity; and sure it is only just and reasonable that we should be rewarded in the next world for the temptations that we conquer in this one. To this Marban could only answer: 'tis true for you, Sister. 'Tis true indeed. And he wondered at her blabbing little tongue, her round, childlike eyes, and it was with an uneasy mind and an itchy body that he followed her round the lands of Crith Gaille, asking himself, if he had to lie with every nun in the nunnery, would he be strong enough to resist the lot of them the way he did the Mother Abbess, or would he have to give in. Let me out of this place, he said to himself, and I'll take care not to put one foot of my feet into it again. I would never have come back to the old country if I dreamt that such trials and goings on were in pickle for me. You're not listening to me, Marban, the little nun was saying. I am, indeed, said he; and to prove it you're telling me that when a school is added huts are built round it for the students, and that the Mother Abbess was often of the same family as the founder, the office coming down from

father to son. Is that what you said, or isn't it? And Eorann had to give in that he did know what she was talking about. But what is there on your mind? she asked. For there is something. I'm thinking about the difference there is between the Ireland I left and the one I've come back to. What difference can you be seeing, for you were no better than a child when you left Ireland? she answered. And you've come back to the same Ireland as always was and always will be, praise be to God for ever and ever.

They hadn't walked very far before he said: We've got out of the way of putting ourselves into temptation, and she answered him: Is it how the Mother Abbess made you out to be holier than you are and that you're afraid of us? It isn't that, said Marban. It is not that indeed. What else can it be, said Eorann, that would stop a man from winning a high place in heaven and he getting the chance? He might be a humble sort of man, said Marban, and he might be one would be content with a small place. You won't be talking like that to the sisters whom I see coming towards us, for they will be expecting you to look upon the temptations we are laying out for you as your heavenly fortune.

You never could be sure with Eorann that she wasn't making fun of you, for there was a sting at the back of whatever she said, and Marban felt that he didn't like her. As she went off, he said to himself: Well, it won't be that one will give me a fall. And he threw an eye over the others that were now round him, talking to him, each one trying to get him to herself, for they all wanted to hear about the monastery in the Pyrenees, and what sort of men the foreign monks were, and if he liked speaking the French better than he did the Irish; and they wanted to know if the prayers and the fastings were long beyond there in the Pyrenees, and what penances they got, and if the Abbot called up every monk in turn

to receive many stripes on the hand. We get two hundred, one said to Marban, in the days before Lent, to remind us that we are at the beginning of the year's penance. But, said he, your prayers here don't seem to me to be out of the way long. You had matins at midnight the same as there is in every convent, and I said Mass for myself at seven. The monks at Bregen, said he, don't seem to be coming down to fetch their hounds. We didn't send them word, Blathnat answered. And we won't send them word yet a while, Muirgil rapped out, for we want to have you here to ourselves so that you may be getting great glory for us.

Now Marban didn't give her an answer, for he was brooding on the dangers that Crith Gaille held for him, and wondering how soon he'd be out of the place, and wondering if he could hit on a plan to trick the nuns and make off. So he kept turning and twisting the ways of escape over in his mind, but nothing came of it until he thought of the dogs. Wouldn't you like, said he, to have a look at my fine hounds? So they went round together to the outhouse where the dogs were tied, and when he called out Cathba, a great baying and scratching answered him. Crede's welcome was an impatient whimper, and Marban bade the nuns hearken. The finest tongue of all is Duban's, he said. And when the doors were opened the three great hounds rose up on their hind legs, straining at their chains, and the nuns cried out and ran and hid themselves behind the doors; but Marban said: You could trust a child with them, 'tis only the smell of a wolf raises up their bristles. So eagerly did the hounds strain against their collars that Marban could hardly loosen them from their chains, but once they were free it was a fine sight to see them at play, jumping over each other and over the nuns, up on the shoulders of everybody, licking their faces and away again, smelling round the tree-trunks, and relieving themselves; going down on

their haunches and then scattering the earth and leaves in a great tumult, jumping, barking, and galloping ahead of Marban, who was chewing away at the idea of how, in the name of this and that, he was ever to get away from Crith Gaille. It would be a fine thing, he was saying to himself, if I up and told these fine ladies: My dogs are on the trail of a wolf; I must after them. And that's the very thing he would have done if he'd any luck. But a wolf that was lying in a thicket was startled out of it, and the three dogs overtook him at the end of the glade. A good fight it was, for the wolf was in his prime, and had there been but two dogs at him instead of three he might have overcome them and got away. But he couldn't fight his way past three. He broke Crede's paw in a snap, and took a lump out of Cathba's throat, but while he was doing them deeds, Duban got him by the windpipe, and the wolf gave in. Terrible animals wolves; and the Irish wolf was as bad and worse than the Pyrenean fellow. I never saw a wolf fight like that one, said Marban. But what ailed the beast to be lying out in that copse? he said to himself, for he has knocked my plans upside down.

The rest of the day went doctoring Crede's broken paw and Cathba's wound. So busy was he attending the dogs he forgot night was coming on, and he had no more eaten his supper when the door opened and Blathnat came in, and she in her night-shirt. We go to bed early in this convent, she said. Does it be like that with you away in the Pyrenees? Marban was hard set to answer her, so dry was his throat, and his heart misgave him, for Blathnat's voice was winning, and he liked the pale brown hair showing under the coif she was taking off her head. Seeing that the monk was beginning to shiver and shake she stopped undressing to reprove him, saying, in a quiet, even voice, that he must smother that look of fear on his face, and that he could count on her to see him through

the worst of the temptations. Do you be putting your trust in me, she said, and leave shivering and shaking, for while I'm here there's nothing can harm you. But before we lie down tell me what happened last night between yourself and herself, Brother Marban. He told her the truth, only leaving out that perhaps it was the fatigue of his journey had made him able to lie alongside the Mother Abbess's side without a kick in him. I understand you well, Sister Blathnat said. After forty no woman is what she used to be, though for her age there isn't a finer woman in Ireland than herself, and there was a day when she would raise up temptation in the stones. Sister Blathnat, the young man answered, from one year's end to the other, we don't see a woman in the cells beyond, and we think it well enough to live without sin. Now if there is no temptation there's no merit, not a scrap, she said, and he replied to her that he had talked that question over the night before. This is what I want to ask you now, said he. Is it true that none of the monks from Bregen have fallen into sin? Tell me that now, said he, and the question seemed to fall so innocently from his lips that it startled Sister Blathnat so much that she said: If that be the way you're going to talk, perhaps another nun had better lie with you, and she was making her way towards the door when Brother Marban said: Oh, Sister Blathnat, if it must be that I lie with any, let it be with you, for you've a kind face and you'll keep the devil out of my mind. And she said: The same words prove you to have a good disposition anyway. Maybe I made a mistake, so I'll lie with you without tempting you much. But before lying down together we will say a little prayer, and Marban prayed for his life, being sore afraid both of her and of the monks up at Bregen.

I hope, the nun said, I've not kept you too long on your knees. You have not, said he; not so long as herself

last night. She always was a long one at her prayers, said Blathnat. We'll strip now, said she and on these words he put off the cloak and unloosened his tunic. Look at me, said Sister Blathnat. Tell me now if I'm not nicer than dear mother about the bosom? And the monk, turning round, thought that he never saw two breasts prettier or whiter than Sister Blathnat's. Like two white birds they are, he said, being a bit of a poet. And as innocent, she added. Now kiss the crucifix about your neck, and then kiss me, and pray that the temptation that will rise up in you shall be overcome. I will pray indeed, he said. I'll pray for all I'm worth. Faith and troth, you are a holy man, she said, after a while, for you're lying as quiet and easy by my side as a man would lie by the side of his brother. I've met them that were more restless than you, and they advanced in years. Great will be your reward. And creeping in closer, she began telling him that he might seek her shape wherever he pleased. You're not tempted at all, she said. I am tempted, indeed, said Brother Marban, and what I see in front of me is three years and half a year and me eating dry bread and drinking water at every one of my meals. Starved I'll be, God help me. Then have recourse to your crucifix, she replied, and you'll win out. Get the best of the devil, said she, and keep your grip on me. That's right. Now lie quietly and doze a little. But there was no doze upon him that night, and if he had not the bread and water and three years of it to think about, there's no knowing what would have happened. After a while she took him in her arms and kissed him, saying: Brother Marban, I'll be leaving you now, the devil has been worsted this time for good and all, though one moment I did think I'd got a sniff of him from under the door. Marban agreed to that, and said that he too had smelt the old boy, and that it

was well for both of them the windows and doors to be barred the way they were.

And then they fell to talking of the crevices the old man could get through if he were so minded, till Sister Blathnat said: Take your hands from my breasts. You've been tempted enough, Brother, and God would not wish a person to be tried beyond his strength. Sleep well, now, like I will myself, and good-night to you, she said, looking at him from the door before closing it. It's just as well that he didn't, she said to herself, as she stood on the stairs; it's always better in the end. For what is the value of the poor life we're living? And it isn't that I would be bringing disgrace upon it, God help me, and on myself, and on our own convent. She said this for she couldn't get it out of her head that Marban was a fresh young lad, and it wasn't more than half-an-hour after getting into her bed before she woke up with a scream out of her, and starting out of her bed with one leap she got to the middle of the floor, the other nuns coming to her, saying: What is it, Blathnat? Tell us what it is now. But all she could do at first was to stare at them, her senses coming back to her slowly, saying: It was only a dream, thank God. That was no more than a dream. And they, guessing that she had been dreaming of the young man, got round the bed, and she told them all she had done, the way she had put herself up against him and telling him that he must take her in his arms, and to be sure and say a prayer lest the devil should be getting the better of him. You weren't tempted yourself at all, Sister? said one of them, with a look. I was, faith, said she, and who knows what would have become of me, for there was a swimming behind my eyes? But I gave a Hail Mary and got rid of it, glory be.

CHAP. XX.

WELL, there they were, sitting round Sister Blathnat's bed just as I'm telling you, and they settling which of them was to give the poor lad his share of trouble on the next night. The monks will be here on Saturday, so you three can lie with him, Sister Eorann, Muirgil and Brigit, one after the other; as soon as one comes out the other goes in, and if he lies quiet while you're with him, there's no doubt but they've sent us a great saint and one that will do honour to Ireland. He's a holy man, indeed. He's a very holy man; you couldn't stir him up with a stick, said the Abbess. These were her very words as they have come down to us in the old stories.

But which of us shall be the first one to lie with him? the nuns asked, and the Mother Abbess answered: You'll draw lots, and on this she got three straws and put them in a box. Whoever draws the smallest one will be the first to lie with him. And the first, your honour, was Brigit, and the second Muirgil. And the third Eorann. That was the way of it. And Brigit, as I told your honour, was a thin girl, with red hair ringletting down her rosy cheeks, who if she hadn't been a nun she might have been as wicked as the old woman of Bear, she that lay with more kings than any other woman in Ireland till she got old and couldn't manage anything. But we mustn't be getting into another story, Alec said. Well, Marban had all he wanted in the way of trouble from that one. She was a great torment, indeed, turning all his senses reeling, and setting his soul fluttering in him, but he stood his ground, for the grace of God was on him that night. And when the Abbess gave a ring of the bell, Brigit said: 'Tis time for me to be off; you're a great man and a holy man, for you've lain very quietly by me considering everything. I tried you deeply, Brother,

but I wouldn't have done it only they were bragging about the piety that is in you, and in you it surely is.

The door opened, and as Sister Brigit went out Sister Muirgil went in, saying, as she passed the other one: I can see by your face, Brother Marban, I can see that you've been greatly tried by Sister Brigit, who is famous all over Ireland for the tests and the trials she puts on the men. While saying these words she slipped off the gown; and she stood up, one of them round figures, with plenty of shape despite the flesh that God has put upon them, and with one shape in her that struck the saint's eyes: she did not go in at the knees, her thighs sloping down into her ankles, and from that out into her feet. And when his hand passed over the limbs and between them, anything might befallen him if she hadn't been a kind-hearted woman. But seeing the trouble he was in, she folded him in her arms just as his mother used to when he was a gossoon, and said: We'll say Our Father together. A Hail Mary might bring me more relief, he answered. Muirgil laughed at that, and tossed her hair from her little round forehead, and for the rest of the time she told him stories about the monks at Bregen, and how anxious they all were to be tempted by her and to resist the temptations, for all thought of this earth, said she, was gone clean out of their minds, only of heaven do they be thinking, and that's what puts the great strength in them. And she told him she got into the same way of thinking herself, but there were times when she could only get a grip on the things of this world. And then the things of the other world didn't seem worth a lot, which put a great fright into the monk's mind that while she was with him she might be thinking too much of the things of this world and not enough of heaven; but it was all to the differ, for after a bit she quieted down. Now I must be leaving you, she said, for Sister Eorann will be here in a minute or two, rousing you up again and

doing her best against you. But you will be a match for her, won't you, now? You don't fear her. Do you now? Ah! It's a shame, so it is, for you're only a boy, and she's educated. You're not afraid, are you? said she, and she gave him another kiss.

Not a great deal, he answered cheerfully, for he was like a man close to the top of the hill, or one that had come very nearly to the top, and sees the ring of day breaking all around him. He was proud, to be sure, and that sort of pride is what the clergy calls the spiritual elation that comes on a man when he has beaten the devil. And well he might be proud, I say, for himself and four fine women had defeated and murdered the devil in four great battles. As he gave a twist in the bed, he remembered that his fight had been stiffer than any the monks had waged, for weren't they and the nuns all known to each other for years past as confessors and penitents? And with that thought he got twice as proud. The fresh enemy is the stiffest to conquer, said he to himself, and now the old boy is to deliver the last assault, which will be, I am thinking, no great matter for me to overcome. She isn't to my liking, and that's no gain to me, but I've won such a load of honour as it is, that God himself will be hard set to find a reward that he can offer me without shame to himself. Here she comes, the hind end of the temptations, and he drew the blanket up to his chin and let on to be asleep.

Asleep you are, Marban, said Eorann, when her turn came, or is it only falling asleep you are without a thought for me at all? The other ones wore you out, but them ones would make anybody tired. I drew the bad number myself. Number three it is. A holy number and lets you in for all the poor jobs. Won't you wake up now and let me into your bed? I'm nearly as tired as you are with the time I was waiting and all. Even if there's no temptation between the pair of us, said Marban, you can

get into the bed. After a while, said she: Have you got no eyes for me at all, or a pair of hands on yourself? I've all them, Marban thought, but he didn't say a word, for he couldn't think of what to say, and being a polite man he didn't like to say: Lie quiet in the bed now like a good girl, and let me be. His weakness was kindness, and so he took her into his arms and kissed her and said: I've said that many prayers this night that the devil is driven out of the convent entirely; not a sniff of him do we get, not one is upon you nor is there one upon me. We're wasting time, said Eorann. She commenced to cry with her head on Marban's shoulder, and soon her tears were running down his neck, first hot and then cold, and then tickling him like a troop of fleas. He asked her what she was crying for, and she said: I did hope to get a great reward with you in heaven, but you won't not so much as look at a girl. 'Tis a poor thing and a hard thing to be a nun in this place. Just because I happened to pull the wrong straw, bad luck to the same straw, I'm left without any way of earning a place in heaven. It would make you think that heaven itself, like earth, is all favouritism. You must not be talking like that, Sister. 'Tis easy for you, full of glory the way you are this night, but here's myself with nothing to do. And she bent down her head on to his shoulder and whispered: Can't you tempt me a little? and handling him freely, she said: It's not so bad after all, for you're beginning to be restless, and that's a sign, and when you're a little more so, we'll have to begin to say our prayers, or we're a lost pair. What is that I hear? Marban cried. 'Tis only myself talking to you. But I hear a sound from the forest! 'Tis nothing, she said. 'Tis the hunters following the wild swine at the ring of day. Don't mind them, but mind myself.

A great and wonderful music there is, he said, in the sound of a horn heard far away in the depth of the forest.

A fine sound it is for the laity to be listening to, she replied, but we should be thinking of the trumpets of heaven which the angels will be sounding to awaken us from the dead, and our Lord coming on the clouds to reward us. And let me tell you this, there won't be as much as the ghost of a reward for me if you lie there with your ears cocked listening to the horn the way you're doing now. The horn is nearer now than it was, Marban answered. 'Tis only the echo of the horn that you do be hearing, and on this earth there's nothing more treacherous than the horn, and she sent a wet stream of tears down into his neck the way he thought he would have to be swimming for his life in another minute. Let me up, he said. Let me up out of this bed. One horn, two horns, three horns, and they sounding from different sides. 'Tis a company that must be hunting after the boar. Forget the boar, she cried, and lie here, and take your ease. He was sorry for her, but he said to himself: I've earned a big enough reward.

The monks at Bregen—— he began. But she rapped out: What good are they to us? And what good are you? I'm only wasting my time here. Good-bye, Marban, and 'tis the great talk I shall be having with the Abbess about the great power that God has given you, and the prayers you have offered up with me. We haven't said many prayers, said Marban. If we haven't said them out we've said them in, she added, and hurried away to tell the Mother Abbess about the holiness of the man she had been lying with and that they all should be thankful to the lord for sending them such a man.

CHAP. XXI.

NEVER have I lain with man as quiet as this one, Eorann repeated, as she went upstairs. I might as well have been in bed with my mother. Will you be telling

me, said the Mother Abbess, who was waiting at the head of the stairs, that he didn't leave his bed once to dip himself in the cistern? I will so, said the nun; he lay by my side talking to me about horns that he was hearing far out in the forests. That's a great saint, I'm thinking, said Mother Abbess. That's a very great saint, surely. There isn't a monk of the monks at Bregen is holier than him, not the Abbot himself, though perhaps I shouldn't be saying it, and he earning great glory with all of you these last ten years; and with myself off and on for the last twenty. But he isn't as big a saint as that lad, I'm thinking. True enough we're stale to him now, and men that are seventy-five take a deal of stirring, but a little virgin like Luachet might set up a great burning in him that our Lord would be greatly gratified to see overcome. 'Tis a great thought surely that has come to you, dear Mother. Let Sister Luachet lie with Brother Marban. It would be a poor thing indeed if a holy man like him should be denied all the chances that the earth can give him of getting a good place up above. I am in the one mind with you, the Mother Abbess answered. But what about the Abbot? He'll be missing his last chance. Why should he be missing it indeed? Won't Luachet be the same coming from Marban's bed as she went into? Blathnat asked. She will not, the Mother Abbess answered, for 'tis the thought that she has never lain by a man's side before that I'm counting on to stir up the devil in our good Abbot, for the last time; the man's years are three score years and ten, and for a while back he hasn't been looking himself at all. Ah! well, I remember the time when he——

But you needn't be telling him, cried Sister Blathnat, butting into the middle of the Abbess's recollections. I wouldn't say that, the Mother Abbess answered; once you begin telling lies there's no end to them. Won't Luachet be getting her experience from Marban?

Eorann murmured slyly. True for you, replied the Abbess. A little knowledge of mankind in her won't be amiss when it comes to her turn to get into bed with the Abbot, if it ever does come, for it was a bad account we had of him a week ago, and the cough's worse. But isn't it the truth, said Sister Blathnat, that the Abbot would like a man that had resisted all of us, and we all fresh to him, to be allowed the advantage of Luachet? I wouldn't be saying he wouldn't, the Abbess answered. A man's luck is his own luck, and isn't it a great thing that he should come here and show all that holiness? It would be no good thing for us if we denied him what God wishes him to receive. Now, my dear, and she turned round to Luachet, you've been listening to what we said, and as the day is done, put aside the vestment that you're making for the Abbot, and go to the oak chest yonder and take out of the orris root and lavender the finest linen garment, and remember that, lying by our Brother, you will be as pleasing in God's sight as you are here stitching a vestment for the holy Mass. A beautiful one it will be, she continued, and she held up the white satin chasuble, embroidered with gold, for the nuns to admire—the one the Abbot was to wear on his seventy-fifth birthday, when he would celebrate High Mass for them all. 'Tis Luachet is the fine stitcher, God be praised, our little Luachet; but a much finer offering than the vestment she will be herself beside the holy man below stairs, and on these words she took the child to her bosom and asked her if she was afraid. Afraid, Mother? Why should I be afraid, since it is you who are sending me to this stranger, a holy man, as all the sisters here have proven him to be?

Could the child say better than that? the Mother Abbess said, turning to her nuns. And they all said she couldn't and that no one could. She turned again to Luachet: Get yourself ready now. Wash your hair the way there'll be

a gloss on it. Look at the gold that is shining through it, and isn't she as nice and as graceful as a little kitten? A great temptation, surely, that none should venture into but the holiest. Go and get ready, Luachet, and don't be shy, for there's no good in that; let him win the greatest prize of all. Do you hear me now, she said; be not shy but push yourself up against him and kiss him in the nape of his neck. You may do that, for it's your business to wake up the old man in him if you can, and we'll be praying for you while we are getting to our beds, and till we fall asleep prayers will be on our lips. We shall be chanting the psalms at midnight, and from lauds to complin, thanking God for the honour we shall be earning, for to-morrow every nun of the nuns in this place will get from me fifty smacks of the ferrule on her hand. Go, dear child, and remember all I've told you, for there is nothing that gives more pleasure in heaven than seeing the man denying himself the woman and they both in the one bed.

'Tis time for us to be going to our rest, she said, turning to the other nuns; but you won't forget, my children, what I told Sister Luachet, to be praying well for her, and all the nuns said they would do that and that they would do it well until the sleep came.

CHAP. XXII.

NOR did one of them break her promise, and out of bed the whole lot of them were at midnight, chanting the psalms, till at last the Mother Abbess said: Now, children, here's the day beginning in the east. The time has come for me to use the ferrule on to your hands. On these words she turned to the press in which she kept the thong, and all the nuns wincing and watching, knowing well the length of the handle and the breadth and the hardness of the leather, and being faint-hearted, as all

women are, they would have been glad to do without the bit of merit they would earn if they could be let off the slaps, for the morning was bitter cold.

Maybe your hands are sore, the Mother Abbess said, as the last nun retired, holding her bruised hands between her knees, but my own back is broken the way I have to leather the lot of you into heaven. 'Tis I myself should be getting whatever recompense is going, for my loins are cracked on me and I've a pain in my head. Now will you have finished with the moaning and the tears, and think a bit of the way the lord suffered on the cross, and of the way Marban is suffering now and he up against our little Luachet's thighs. She is staying with him a long while now. Too long, indeed, for there ought to be an end to everything, and great saint as the man is, he shouldn't get it too heavy. Are they chanting psalms together? We might do well to hear them, for to see or to hear the holy is next door to being holy.

Down went the lot of them, stepping on the tips of their toes for fear they might disturb the saints in their mutual devotions. Devotions it is, said the Abbess, for we can hear their voices mingled in sweet sighs. But after listening a little while longer she turned to Blathnat and said: Your ears are better than mine maybe, what I hear doesn't sound like psalms. Let you listen now, and, giving her place to the nun, she waited. After listening, Blathnat said: Mother Abbess, it's no psalm I'm listening to. That's no psalm at all. Then what can they be doing to each other? And it isn't prayers that I hear either. Them's not prayers. Then give your place to Brigit, who may hear better. Yes, let me listen, said Brigit, and she cocked her ear to the keyhole. Sister Blathnat is right. There isn't a psalm in it of all the psalms. After Brigit it came to Eorann to put her ear to the keyhole, and having more courage than the rest, she turned to the Mother Abbess, saying: It's like the doves

on the roof they are. Like the doves on the roof? cried the Mother Abbess, and with a great fear in her heart she put her ear to the door, and hearing a scream that could be none else than a love scream, she cried out: 'Tis profanation of our holy convent. And together with the nuns she bumped herself against the door until they got it down. Faith, sir, the pair within were in the last round before the Abbess could pull the clothes from off the bed, and tear them asunder. 'Tis all over, said she: The tallow is spilt, said she, her maidenhead is lost to the lord, the sheets testify to it, said she. Woe is woe. Woe to the Abbot. Come out of it, daughters; come out, I say, for the devil is here, and here he may stop. Sin, sin, she said, and sin on the top of sin. It's not the first; it won't be the last. Come out, children. Come out with yourselves from this cell of sin. Innocents ye are. Get out, I say. Isn't that one the divil? Isn't that one the divil? Ah, you'll pay for it. You'll pay for it. Hell's your portion. Hell and hot water. Get out, I say. I'm ruined. I am so. I'm ruined. Will ye get out, or will ye not get out? I'll skin you if you don't get out. Ah, you divil! Ah, you divil! she repeated. The nuns following her out to the terrace, and the five of them walked there, never addressing a word the one to the other in their sorrow, till the monks began to come from Bregen. I see them coming, Mother, Blathnat cried; and now they've stopped at the foot of the hill, for the Abbot is out of puff. How am I going to tell the holy man about that pair? God help me, said the Abbess. What am I going to say to him at all?

I think I mentioned to you, sir, that the Abbot was at this time seventy, and maybe a few years over. My grandfather wasn't sure but it was eighty. Thin he was, and lean and shadowy, frail as a sick bird, he used to say. I like to hear him tell Marban's story, and he told it so often to me that there was a time when I had

this part of it off by heart. But it is a long time since I've told this back end of the story. It not being to the liking of them that do be asking me for stories, I leave it out. Don't leave it out on my account, Alec. Very well, sir, I'll tell the whole of it. My daughter, said the Abbot to the Abbess, who had just mentioned that she had a tale to tell him sadder than any he ever heard, it must be a very sad tale indeed, for I've heard my share of sad stories. But before you hear the story, said she, tell me, did the medicines I send you do you any good? You've got the cough on you yet. Thank you, my daughter, for the medicines; I did not take them, feeling sure that I'll not be better than I am this side of Jordan. But won't you come inside, she said, for there's a wind stirring in the trees? A pleasant wind, he answered her. Get me a chair to sit in. She cried to Blathnat: Find my Lord Abbot a chair, and bring a rug for him as well. And no sooner was he seated in the chair, with the rug tucked round him, than he said: There's one thing good about a wolf, and that's his fur. Once his fur is taken from him there's no evil in him. He dipped his hand into the fur as he might into the holy-water stoop itself. My Lord Abbot—— the nun began, and she stopped as a horse will at a heap of stones on the road. Go on, woman, he said: there are words for everything; out with your story. Well, she said, you know about Marban. Know about Marban? said the Abbot. Why, wasn't it myself that wrote to the Abbot in the Pyrenees to ask him to send Marban with the wolf-hounds? Is he here? and how many hounds has he with him? He has three hounds, the Abbess replied. Then all is well. What! Has he been wounded on the way? go on, woman. But instead of doing as she was bid she started asking him if he had taken his medicine, and other foolish questions, setting him coughing again. Go on, woman, he cried, as soon as

he could get his breath. Go on, woman; go on. How long has Marban been here? Go on with your story, and be delaying no longer if you'd have me hear it. You see the state I'm in. And afraid to delay any longer, though there was nothing she liked better than dragging a story out by the heels, she told him that Marban had been with them for three or four days. But no further could she go, saying that she'd rather be lying dead at his feet than that her mouth should be telling the dreadful story, and much more rubbish of the sort, angering the Abbot, setting him coughing till he might have choked as much with anger as phlegm. Oh, my blessed convent ruined, disgraced by him whom we took to be the holiest man in Ireland, saving your Reverence's presence—— He may be easily holier than I am without being the holiest man in Ireland. Go on, my sister, say what you have inside your mouth. Then, with many sobs and waving of hands, for she was one of them high-flown women, she told the story, watching the Abbot's face out of the corners of her eyes all the while. But so distracted was he by his cough that it wasn't till she came to telling him how she wished to benefit him that she knew for sure he'd been listening to her, for then he gave a little smile, but it soon died away and his face darkened again. It's the custom of our country to put ourselves into temptations, said he, so that we may be more pleasing in God's sight. I've done as others have done; and with God's grace came safely through many perils. I thank you for your heavenly thoughts of me, but I'm glad I was spared the pain of refusing the last trial, as I would have, for it's God's truth that it would have been no trial to me at all, as my condition makes plain to you. You're not satisfied with what I did, my lord, said she. I am so, the Abbot answered, but I've often had my doubts about the wisdom and the humanity of these same trials, and wondered if they were as

pleasing in the sight of God as we think they are, and if we hadn't better accept mankind as God made it without trying to remake it for him ourselves. Let me see Marban and hear what he has to say for himself. Bring Luachet to me too; she may have a word to put in about her own transgressions. But as a stock she stood before him, having lost her wits entirely. Woman, will you be doing my bidding? And she went away, sure to find them, for hadn't she the sinners under lock and key?

We're greatly afeared, said the nuns one to the other, as soon as she was gone, that the news may be the undoing of the last thread of life. Now will you be looking at him dozing in his chair—wasted like the hills themselves, the monks answered. But will he be turning them into the wilderness as Abraham did Hagar? Blathnat asked, and before the monks could give her an answer the Abbess came back with the two of them—the girl crying, for she was right frightened, but Marban with a face on him grey as a stone until he caught sight of the Abbot. I'm sorry, my Lord Abbot—— he began. I'm at the end of the plank, Marban, but don't be thinking about my cough; pay no heed to it. We pray that God will spare you to us for many years, Marban answered. There are few years in front of me if there's a year itself, said the Abbot. But this is a bad tale they've been telling me about you. It is, indeed, a bad tale, so it is, in their minds, was the answer the Abbot got from Marban. Would you have me think that they have told it falsely? the Abbot whispered. Stories are told and taken the way we understand them, Marban answered, and these women look on me as an evil-doer, it being true that I've broken the rule. But an evil-doer by nature I'm not, as you can learn for yourself if you'll write a letter to my own abbot. The monks beyond know me there day in and day out, and no man can be fooling a whole monastery day in and day out for ten

years, as you will know, none better than yourself, my Lord Abbot; and they'll tell you that I was decent ever since I went to live with them and that they wouldn't take me nor make me out to be what the nuns think. You would plead, Marban, said the Abbot, that there are temptations against which no man's strength is enough; that the temptation might be increased till the saints themselves fall. But St. Anthony—— I'm not comparing myself with anyone, my Lord Abbot. All I want is to tell my tale and get it out of me. The Mother Abbess has told hers, and you've a right to tell yours; go on with it, said the Abbot. I thank you for that, Marban answered, my Lord Abbot, and as for my story, you know most of it yourself as well as I do myself: that I left this country no more than a gossoon, not knowing a word about the way they crucify the body in this place for the love of God and to win a prize in heaven. I went away knowing nothing at all of the customs of the old country, and returned as ignorant of them as the day I took ship for Bordeaux, as I told the Mother Abbess, and likewise too did I tell her that the custom of the temptations had been stopped in France in the years back, it not having been found to work well at all in France. But she told me Ireland was the land of saints and France was the land of lechers and wantons; and she said that I'd have to prove myself, and show what I was, and that, being a young man, she would let me off from the young sisters and would lie with me herself to give me an easier time. I was shy, and that prevented me from saying no to her offer of the bed. I should have said no; but she would have thought I meant that what she said about France was true. I've no answer to make against the charge of cowardice nor any excuse on that head. And I've no answer to make against the charge of vanity, for after having proved I could stand up against the flesh and the devil in five combats I may have said to myself that I'd

show these nuns how a man may live in holiness out of Ireland as well as in Ireland. This idea of mine was helped maybe by the fact that I've lived a chaste life ever since I told to you, long ago, my lord, that I wanted to dedicate my life to the service of our Lord Jesus Christ. You can get the truth of it from my own monastery, and you can get the proof of it here from the nuns themselves; ask of the nuns that lay with me, and every one'll tell you, if she doesn't tell a lie, that our embraces were according to the rule. It's not a small thing, my lord, and I'm telling you what you know yourself, for a young man to stand out against five women, one after the other, and all of them naked in his bed. If I'd been a bad one I'd have given in at the first go off to the lusts that every woman awakens in every man, but the nuns can tell you the same thing. I resisted the whole lot of them as well as the monks there around about you, and as well as you did yourself, my Lord Abbot. My son, said the Abbot, after he got a venomous cough up out of his throat, we have all resisted the nuns of Crith Gaille. You were all well known the one to the other, my lord, and where there's no novelty there isn't much temptation, for it's novelty and strangeness is the devil's strongest weapon against man. The women here were all new to me, but I resisted them all, though I'm younger and a lot younger than the youngest man I see in front of me, and 'tis for that I'm confident and sure that I only speak the truth when I say that last night I fell to her who was destined for my arms, for my lips, and for my usage only.

Luachet is beautiful, but it wasn't her body altogether that drew me. Well, this much I can say with truth, that there is something beyond the lust of the eye and the desire of the flesh, something that is beyond the mind itself, and maybe that thing is the soul; and maybe the soul is love, and whosoever comes upon his soul is at

once robbed of all thought and reason, and becomes like a flower. It was like that with me when my mother told me about our Lord Jesus's appearance in Galilee, and about his suffering and his death, for you'll remember it, my Lord Abbot, that I went to yourself and told you that the love of Jesus was in my head ever since I heard the story from my mother, and that I wanted to lose myself in love of him. And last night I was carried away just as I was on that first occasion, and I somehow cannot believe it true that my love of her will rob me of my love of Jesus, nor that her love of me will rob him of her love, for in our hearts it is all one and the same thing, and aren't we more sure that God made our hearts than of anything else? It may be, Marban continued, after he had had a look round, that I did not know this always. It may be that yesterday I would have denied the truth of what I'm now saying to you all. All the same it is the truth I'm telling you, that when the door opened and Luachet came into the room, the light of the candle that was in her hand shining on the white scriptures—— The scriptures tumbled out of her hand, the old Abbot interrupted. They did not, my lord. She gave them to me, and they made plain to me that she is herself a good part of me, my scripture for ever, as long as this life lasts in me and, if I may say it without heresy, she'll be that for the life everlasting that's to come with our Lord Jesus Christ. As good doctrine as I've heard this many a day, said the Abbot, and what's true in it has been for a long time past in the mind of God, and will be for evermore. But what I'd know from you now is the answer you'll be making to him when he comes to examine you about your broken vows, and the account-book before him. God knows as well as your Reverence that the ones that put on the vows can take off the vows, and as the journey before me is a long one, I'll be starting on it and it will hearten the pair of us to have the blessing of your hand

and your voice if you will be giving it. I can and I will give it. I'm with you both in this much that I hope the temptation that was put upon you will be put on no one else in my diocese.

My Lord Abbot, jerked in the Abbess, I'm thinking that you shouldn't be staying longer in the air, for there's a keenness in it, and a great draught, and your soup is ready in the house. My soup, I thank you for reminding me of it, Mother Abbess. Have you only scolding for me this day, your Reverence, and I sinking under the trouble? she said. Scolding? Have I not said, Mother Abbess, that I'm at the end of the plank, and the flesh is liable to a shiver or two when it comes to the last lep? Is it scolding you I am? I've this much to say, Mother Abbess, that I've had my doubts about these temptations for a long time, and it's often in my mind that at the heel of the hunt some poor girl would be left on her back.

He knew, said Alec, how to speak up to her, and as small as a mouse making off through a chink in the wainscoting, she brought him up to his soup in the big room, tied a napkin round his neck, and sat watching him while he drank it. At another table the nuns were giving the monks their bit, saying: Take a little piece of this, Father Bhendan; that bit won't lie heavy on the stomach. But there was no need at all, for they were all men of fine appetites and had gathered a lot of cold air into their bellies coming down from Bregen. It was Blathnat alone that was a bit forgetful of the guests, and seeing her making off, the nuns began to ask what she was after, passing on a wink and a word and a saying that she always had something in her head, but not guessing at all that Blathnat was thinking that it was a long journey from Mayo to Waterford, and a dangerous one, everybody except them in the monasteries going his own gait, and a lot of unfriendliness in the country, the same as now. Well, your honour, this is the way it was. On the fringe

of the forest she pushed a basket of bread over Marban's arm. It will soon begin to weigh heavy, said she, but Luachet will take her turn at it, and turn and turn about's fair play, and there is here within this basket what will take you to the Shannon if you're careful about the teeth. Now I must be off with myself; good luck to you. And with that she gave them both a kiss, and away with herself on her own road.

And they silent enough, stood watching the glimpses of her habit flying through the trees, and when there was no more of her to be seen they stepped out on their journey that would take them long weeks, long months. We'll get to Waterford before the summer is out, said Marban, according to our luck. But Luachet, for she was no more than a child, didn't care how long the journey lasted, she being with her sweetheart, and the quiet forest all round them. But they hadn't gone far before Marban remembered his hounds, and would have turned back for them but Luachet wasn't a bit sure the Mother Abbess would let her go with him the second time: she would die of fright if he left her in the forest by herself. Marban could only smile, listen to her pretty talk and look into her clear, childish eyes —still childish, for up to last night she knew nothing of life at all. So did they walk and wander in the month of May, seeing the ferns uncurling and the speedwell showing between the ground ivy; and listening to all the singing birds and eating their bread where the banks were mossy.

We still hear the squeal of the badger in these parts, Alec said, and there were many more animals in ancient Ireland—bears, I believe, and wolves in plenty for sure. Now it was the thought of these same beasts, and every one of them with a jowl and a jaw, that put the shadow on Marban's face—a shadow that distressed Luachet when she came running back to him with her hands full

of ferns and wildings. You're not sorry you came away with me? she asked. He took her in his arms then and kissed her, and walking on together through the woods, they began speaking about the trees, and I can remember to this day the wonder that rose up in me when I heard my grandfather say that while sitting under a great oak, where they were to sleep that night, Luachet said to Marban: I don't like the oak; there's no welcome in it, no invitation to sit beneath its branches. But Marban answered her: You mustn't be saying anything against the oak. And she said she would never speak against the oak again when she heard from him that the ribs of the ship that had brought Marban to Ireland were cut out of an oak-tree, and that the ribs of the ship that would take them to France would likewise be made of the oak. It's a good tree then, Luachet replied, and I shall be loving it better. But why don't you love it now? Marban asked her, and she replied: It's that I'm thinking that there seems to be an unfriendly spirit inside of the tree we're sitting under. That's a queer thing to be saying, he said, and I'm thinking that you're saying hard things about the oak because it's leafless in the month of May; but in the heel of the season, when the acorns do be dropping through the still air, it is a rich and hospitable tree enough. Let the oak be friendly to the pigs but I would sooner be sitting under a beech-tree, was her answer to him. Well, that is strange, for the pigs love beech mast as well as oak mast. Now, Marban, will you be telling me what tree you re most disposed to, she said, for they must be all well known to you and you walking along through the forests from Waterford? What tree am I most disposed to? Marban said. Well, taking all in all, it's the holly, for it sheltered me in the cold March nights. And he called her to admire one near by under whose branches they would find it hard to squeeze themselves. And

Marban never said a truer word than this, Alec interjected, as I know well myself; the holly is as good as a broken house to a man on a winter's night. Luachet thought that the leaves looked dark, and she didn't like the thorns, and later in the evening she stopped before a birch and said: That tree is more beautiful than the holly. And Marban answered her that the birch rose up as sweetly at Luachet's own body, and he said that the wind in the trees was as soft as her voice. It's the most musical of trees; his very words as reported by my grandfather, who got them from a book. Now what tree is that naked one? Luachet asked. That one, Marban answered, is the ash, the last one in the forest that the summer clothes. The most useful of the many that God has given us, he added, and to help the time away he told her it was the ash that furnished the warrior with fine spears. And when they came upon a hazel copse, he told her of the nuts that would be ripe for gathering in the autumn. And when they came to some poplars, he said the poplar and the aspen were useless trees, one as the other, the poplar giving but poor shade to the wayfarer, and the aspen not doing much better, a ragged, silly tree, shivering always as with ague. I like the willow better to-day than I did yesterday. How is that? she said. And he answered her that as soon as they came to a willow he would tell her. See, he said, how faithfully they follow the brook, as faithfully as I shall follow you, Luachet, listening to the talk of your mouth, bending my ear to it, the way the willows listen to the rippling water. And she asked if there was no tree he did not love at all. He said there was one, the pine, for it sheds only a fibrous litter in which nothing grows. A pine wood is without birds or animals, the marten is the only animal one meets in a pine wood. My grandfather knew more about trees than any man I ever knew, and he'd go on telling about their qualities until you'd be

tired. Alec, he'd say, you've been away; I'll talk to you no more. No, no; I've been listening ever so hard. Then tell me the quality of the alder. I remember it all but can't put words upon it; and then I'd tease him to tell me again of the ruined fort, in which Marban and Luachet spent the night, to be driven out of it at day-break by the eagles, a nesting place it was for them birds, and at dawn they were screaming, frightening Luachet so that she couldn't do else than to climb into the limb of a tree overhanging the fort. And Marban was driven to follow her out by the birds.

A fine story that was to tell a boy, how, creeping out on the limb of the tree after her, she cried to him that the branch was breaking; but she cried out too late, and down the two of them tumbled, through a thicket much like the one in which I spied the Murrigan, coming down in the dry bottom all bleeding and torn; they were hardly able to drag themselves down to the brook, where they stripped themselves of what clothes was left to them; and a fair sight it was to a boy's mind, the pair picking each other clean, or as clean as may be, for after a drop through a blackthorn thicket 'tis hard to get the last spikes out of you, as hard as it is to get the last rabbit out of a ditch. There's always one left, and it itching somewhere and in the sorest place in your body, you may be sure.

They journeyed on and spent the next night in a sheeling by a lonely lake, but there was a friendly woman in it, who shared a couple of eels with them. But begorra I'm forgetting to tell you about the fawn they took charge of. The wolves had had the doe, and the fawn was dying in the ditch; but the woman in the sheeling milked her goat, and after that drink of milk the fawn would not leave them, but kept springing after them, jumping over the bushes in front of them, delighting them with his agility and lying down by them at night. I don't

rightly remember what became of this fawn; you'll have to look it out for yourself, sir, when you go to Dublin, in one of the old books where my grandfather found it, and you'll read in them some of the tales he used to be telling me of the madmen. Yourself must have known not a few of them in your childhood, for not later than fifty years ago they were common enough, the idiots going about the country with the beggars, an encouragement to the people to put their hands in their pockets. You've seen them, haven't you? And I answered that I had. Well, you can easily imagine, your honour, at the time I'm relating, when there was no madhouse at all in Ireland, but a great deal of wilderness, that the mad would be going astray from their relatives, living upon sloes and holly berries and nuts from the hazel-trees, and cress from the springs, and how they would be finding but little nourishment from these and would be crying about the travellers they might come across for bread and meat; and it was one of these madmen maybe that robbed the fawn from Marban and Luachet, who had come to love it, thinking of the time when they would be taking it back to France with them, and keeping it till it grew into a fine stag with horns upon it, reminding them of the eagles and the branches they had fallen through into the dry bottom, for though hurt, Luachet said herself, they would be thinking of this fawn and this journey to the day of their death. It must have been the madmen that stole the fawn from them, but I disremember.

And there was much more my grandfather used to tell of their adventures in the wilderness, how they came upon some women beating flax by a river-side, and how one laid down her scutch, saying she was feeling uneasy, as well she might, for she was going to have a child; and as she stood watching the river going by it dropped from her like an egg from a hen; there was no more about it. But your honour should have heard my grandfather tell

of all the adventures that befell them in the monasteries on their way to the Shannon, how—but it would be wearisome to relate all the odds and ends: how they got across most of the road in safety from Magh Line to Magh Li, from Magh Li to Ana Liffey, and passed through the wooded brow of Sliabh Fuaird till they reached Rathmor, and over Magh Aoi and across bright Magh Luirg until they stepped across the mearing of Cruachan, and how they footed it from Cruachan to Sliabh Cua and off again through Glaisgaile and southward through stony hills and curving paths until they were within a couple of days of the seaport.

A big ship will take us off there, he said, for now Luachet was sore in all her bones, and weary of the great wilderness they had been through, and weary of the monasteries they had rested in. Only one more forest, he said, lies between us and the sea; and after that the world is all fair valleys and pleasant hills and beautiful trees that we shall sleep under in comfort and in love. And so did he comfort her and encourage her to bear the fag end of the journey. Now we're at the skirt of the last forest, he said. But he didn't say that it was in that forest he had heard wolves howling and snarling when he came up from Waterford on his way to Crith Gaille, and that he might have left his bones there had it not been for the hounds that were with him. His hope was that the wolves might be seeking their food in some other forest, so he said nothing until, as the day drooped and the darkness gathered into the branches, he stopped to listen. There's a howling near by, she said; would that be a wolf or a dog? A wolf it is, he replied. It's on our own tracks; and he's calling to his fellows, and they'll be after us soon. We must be looking round, Luachet said, for a tree to climb into. But this wood is a pine wood, said she, and there isn't a branch of the branches

within our grip. Oh, Marban, are we to be eaten and devoured by wolves?

CHAP. XXIII.

SO Luachet and Marban were devoured by wolves, Alec? I'm sorry for that. All the rest of your story I like very much—the Bregen monks sending to the Pyrenean monastery for hounds, they having themselves run out of hounds owing to a dispute with a king about a piece of land; that motive brings Ireland up before us—a quarrel over a piece of land! Excellent. And all the different episodes told faithfully and candidly without immodest insistence. Excellent! And the last, Marban's vindication, a masterpiece! Your honour is very kind to speak to me like that, but tell me why you don't like the end of the story as well as the beginning. Because, Alec, I suspect that an ecclesiastic unleashed the wolves. It would never do to allow a pair of lovers to go away to the Pyrenees to live happily in broken vows. So you think, your honour, that the story did not come down unchanged from father to son? I'm not saying it didn't, Alec, only—— But isn't yourself the great story teller, and should be knowing better than another what end a story should be taking? How would you have me alter the story? Faith and troth, Alec, in that question you have me bet, for Ireland was full of wolves at that time, and it would be well-nigh a miracle not to be overtaken by a pack of them fellows. . . . Let me think. The alternative is: Babies in the Pyrenees. Marriage bells there could not be, unless Marban went to Rome and got relief from his vows. Now that I come to think of it, the end of your story seems to me to be the right one. A sad and a cruel end; but it may have fallen out just as you relate it. The only thing I'm sorry for is that we

have not all the adventures of the lovers in the wilderness before the end came.

Well, sir, I've told it the way I got it from the grandfather, just as he used to tell it when he was in the humour for dreaming over the old Ireland of long ago, and he had it from his father or from the old writings, for he was reading every evening in the National Libraries in Dublin, leaving me after his supper to go away to the library, or maybe taking me with him: 'tis many an hour I've spent sitting by him, kicking my heels and wearying of the place. Your father—— I began. —was away in the country looking after the farm. You see, sir, the grandfather was the second son, and the elder brother, Patrick, got the farm; and when he died without children he left it to his wife, and when she passed away, God be merciful to her soul, the farm came to the grandfather, who had been a clerk in Dublin ever since he was twenty. Before that he was a clerk in Castlebar, without knowledge of the country at all. He would have sold the lease, thirty-one years and three lives, only that my father, who was then a lad of seventeen, said: Let me go down and work the farm for you. Which he did, making a fair profit from the first. He got married soon after that. I was born and reared on the farm, but was always a botch at a fair, and, seeing how it was, the father thought it would be better for me to follow after my grandfather, who got me a job in his office when I was about fifteen, and I was a messenger boy there till I was twenty. Then that grandfather died, leaving me just what took me to America in search of a fortune. At that time people used to be talking about America, and the great things that were doing there. So you went to America, Alec? I did, your honour, and was at all sorts of work, till the sun caught me in the nape of the neck, and I travelling in the dry goods line in Mexico.

But so empty is my mind of any Mexican memories

that my attention must have been drawn from Alec's narratives by the rising and falling lines of the Westport hills, all beyond reproach except perhaps the too symmetrical Croagh Patrick, for the next time I heard him he was saying that he didn't believe that there was another such queer place as Ireland anywhere in the whole world. I replied: I am with you, and not less queer in the past than in the present. Ireland is a poor place, he said, compared with what she once was, and we talked politics for a while. But in no place, he interjected suddenly, has there been such grand saints as in Ireland. Where else would you find——? All the same, Alec, in the stories you've told me they've shown themselves as weak as ourselves might have been if we had been exposed to the same temptations. Isn't that so? Alec seemed unwilling to commit himself to an opinion on this point, and, after some equivocation, began to tell me there had always been grand saints in Ireland, men who had gone into temptations, the temptation of food and drink and of women, and had resisted them all. Did your honour never hear of Father Scothine? he said suddenly. I had to confess that I had not, and the admission, although given reluctantly, with apologies for long years of absence from Ireland, seemed to cause him some disappointment and drew from him the reflection that Irishmen live out of Ireland the best part of their lives usually. But Ireland, I said, is always with us wherever we are, and perhaps Ireland was never nearer to you than the years you were in Mexico. True for you, he interjected; and Ireland, I continued, is always in my mind, whether I live in Paris or in London. I'm sure it is, your honour, for your father was a good Irishman, God rest his soul.

And now will you be telling me the story of Father Scothine? His eyes, of uncertain blue, were fixed upon me, and I said to myself: He is asking himself if he ought to tell the story of Father Scothine to a man who

has been so long out of Ireland, who is no better than an Englishman; or is he, I continued, thinking the story out afresh, shaping it to the idea that holy Ireland entertains of herself, putting a good skin on the lie, as himself would word it; and to interrupt him in the fabrication of a homily, if he were engaged on one, I asked him suddenly if he could tell me what kind of man Father Scothine was. A story, I said, gains in interest if we can see the characters plainly; one should have them in one's mind all the time whilst listening to a story.

CHAP. XXIV.

I'VE always heard my grandfather say, he answered, that Father Scothine was the strongest man in the County Mayo in his young days, great at hurling and throwing the stone and in all the sports; six feet and some inches, he was, with a head on him as round as the balls that top the pillars before a landlord's gateway. Big hands, long feet and the eyes of them that fear hell, for though he was the holiest man in or out of Ireland, Scothine lived in fear of hell always, and it was this fear sent him out of his village, and away from his chapel, into the wilderness. And did he learn in the wilderness, I asked Alec, that he was not to go to hell, and was it the knowledge that he was saved brought him back to his village? I'm not able to answer that question, sir, Alec answered. I can only tell you the story the way I got it from the grandfather, and from what he said I think Scothine didn't bother himself a lot about miracles or visions, but that he was troubled with a great fear of hell that now and again slackened and left him in peace and at other times gripped him entirely and sent him climbing the trees for a lodging out of the way of the wolves. That was how he used to live out in the crags and up in the trees when the fear took hold of him, along with the

thought that he was losing his soul in village idleness, doing nothing but saying a mass now and again when the people required it. But when the fear wasn't on him he was as soft and quiet and sensible a man as you could meet in a long day's walk. A thick, heavy lump of a lad, taking things easy and saying his mass like another priest on Sunday. The only difference between him and the other priests was that it was rare he missed saying Mass on weekdays. His eating and drinking, it's true, was never the same as other men's, for when he was in the village he lived very much as he did in the wilderness, his diet being seldom more than cress, which he would gather himself from the spring, and a few acorns from the oaks in autumn and a fistful of hazel nuts. When there were no more of these he lived on rye bread, and didn't touch the meat except on Christmas Day. That puts me in mind of the leg of mutton. He ate one, and it tormented his conscience the way he took the pledge never to chew meat again, but not wishing to make Christmas Day like any other day, he would let you give him a trout from the river on Christmas Day or an eel out of a bog hole. The rest of the year he went meatless, lowering his health until he got sick, and it being dinned into his ears that he was killing himself, which no Christian is permitted to do, he let them give him a pot of broth. The same broth did him a power of good, and he got back the health in a few days, but no sooner was he on his legs again than his conscience began to worry him about the broth, and once more the thought caught hold of him that he must be hiding to save the soul he would be losing if he stayed another day in the village. Off he went to hide in a place called Glenn o' Goshleen. You may have seen it, sir, for it was part of your father's property; it was sold in the famine years; a beautiful place that was in Father Scothine's time, with woods all over the Partry hills, and in these

woods he hid himself; and there he lived for months, dodging away from everybody, afraid they might bring him things to eat, or put a roof over his head, which they might have done too if they could have found him, for he was well thought of. But being as artful as a pet fox, he was able to keep his distance, and when people began to think he was dead in the woods, and to forget him, he was making his way round the bend of the lake across the country, never stopping till he came to the naked crags above the salt water, a place that is now known as Oldhead, but what they called it in the time gone by I disremember. He lived there on gulls' eggs and the mussels and winkles that he picked up on the shore, lying out every night on the naked crags, doing penance for his sins. What they were, sir, I cannot tell you: vapours of the brain, I'd say, and no more than that. One day the vapours left him, and he went back to his parish and did his share of shriving and saying Mass and reading the gospels, as quiet a man as you'd find in the whole of Ireland, and everybody thinking the old madness had left him. He was the same mind himself, if he thought about it at all. All we know is that his mother came to see him, and she said: Everything must seem to you like a dream. And he said: Like a dream it is, maybe, but our dreams are as much a part of ourselves as our waking moments. And a solemn look came into his face, and his big eyes rolled in their sockets. It would be better, mother, said he, according to the talk that's going, not to be judging anything, but to be always doing something and mortifying this flesh, which will drag souls down into hell if we are not subduing it day in and day out. You see, sir, his mind was the same as it always had been, only hell wasn't quite so plain to him as it was the time he ran off to Glenn o' Goshleen or got among the crags at Oldhead. He was always a bit afraid that he was doing wrong, and it was at this time of quiet,

the greatest he ever knew in his life, that a vision came to him, and he sitting underneath an oak-tree by the river-bank, watching the water go by. A pleasant place the same place is now, for that matter. The same oak may be standing yet, for I've heard tell that an oak will live a thousand years. A willow is not so lasting a tree, but belike them that are now standing are from the seed of those that were dropping to the river in Scothine's day. That was his favourite place for hatching out his thoughts, and seeing him sitting there so much at home among the birds, the word went that he had learnt the talk of the birds in Glenn o' Goshleen, which is a strange story enough, but not stranger than that a man should build himself a nest in the fork of a tree, and that the pigeons in the branch above him should come and go and feed their chicks without minding him. As much as the birds he loved the beasts—the foxes and the badgers—and they came to him out of their holes, and the gulls came to him from the sea; and there were ducks and geese and wild swans on the river, and he would listen to them chattering away at each other when the south wind blew. And there were otters in the stream, and he used to be sorry when the otter slid down into the water and came up with a fish in his mouth, but he never interfered with them. I take the water-grass and he takes the fish, he would say. But he liked the badgers that lived up in the woods better than the otters, for the badgers ate the roots and hurt no one. You see the sort of man he was, a gentle and happy lad, fearing his own kind more than he feared the wolves and the bears, for in Scothine's days bears and wolves were as plentiful as weasels are nowadays, and martens were hopping from branch to branch in the pine-trees, and they after the birds. He was unhappy when he found the wings and the breast feathers of a wood-pigeon, and would look at them sadly, saying: Was it a marten that did the deed,

or was it a hawk? As for the robins, they never left him alone; the blackbirds and the thrushes knew him and trusted him, the way that they would take bread out of his hand when he had any to give, which was often enough, for he used to go without the bit himself so that he might have something for the shuler and the wandering rogues, and he'd only keep for his own jaw a few acorns that he'd pick up; a poor diet, and many's the belly-ache he got on the head of it, I'd say. But he didn't mind, claiming that God knew better what was good for him than he did himself. It was on one of these fast days, while sitting under the oak, with his eyes on the river, and he not seeing it at all, for his thoughts were away in the desert whither Jesus our Lord had gone to be alone, and where he met the devil, who told him he'd give him all the kingdom of earth if he'd fall down and adore him, a great lie, your honour, for the devil hadn't got the kingdom of earth to give our Lord Jesus Christ, who is himself possessed of all that is in the heaven above and in the earth beneath and in the waters under the earth. I mayn't have the devil's own exact words, your honour, but I'm thinking the gist of it was that if our blessed Lord would bow down and worship him he could have whatever he liked in this world; perhaps no mention was made of heaven at the time. Scothine was thinking the devil must have been a bit artless that time, and should have known that Jesus would answer him: Thou must not tempt the Lord thy God, the way he did answer him. All the same, said Scothine to himself, it must have been a great temptation to the Lord Jesus not to turn the stones into bread, and he doing a fast for forty days and forty nights, and hungry enough, I'll go bail, at the end of it, but he had promised his Father that the spirit should not yield to the flesh, and he wouldn't go back on that, and his Father

had promised to reward him by raising him from the dead after three days' burial.

It was while thinking on this temptation that Scothine came to say to himself: I wish God would send the devil to tempt me, and I sitting here, so that I would make sure of resisting the temptation, and getting a high place in glory hereafter for my own self. Let the devil appear, he said, and I'll manage somehow to give him a fall. It was in the shape of a black man with goat's feet and a scut of a tail that Scothine expected to see the devil, but the devil suits his shape to the job he's on, and this time he took the shape of a beautiful woman, come up through the willow-trees from the river. She stood, in his vision, smiling, and beckoning him to follow her into the woods. Maybe his mind was wandering, and maybe he was upset by the hunger, but he got on his feet and took after her up the path. He hadn't gone far before she disappeared into the willows, and he heard a mocking laugh that gave him the fright of his life, and set him wondering if God had answered his prayer and sent the devil to him indeed. He wasn't sure either that he had rightly resisted the devil, for hadn't he looked after the vision eagerly, and the one that looks after a woman hath committed adultery with her in his heart; the same being what our Lord said, or nigh to it. Scothine would have the words off better than I. He went home with his heart going pit-a-pat, like a duck's foot in mud, from the fright he got, and he thinking and asking himself whether he ought to go back to the crag of the gulls and live there for a year on raw eggs or the leavings of the fish that the birds didn't want, guts and the like; or if he ought to go to Glenn o' Goshleen and eat water-grass and oak apples, and sleep up in a tree at the heel of the day out of harm's way of the wolves, the prowlers. The morrow would settle all that, said he, but something ought surely to be done at once in the way of penance and

mortification. He could not think of a thing except to strip himself to the buff and, going to his cupboard, he took out the scourge; but he could not do more, it seemed, than to tickle himself with the lash, and the man that he used to pay wages to beat him beforetimes, until the blood would run down his hams and his shanks, had gone back with himself to his own parts. Scothine had no mind, and no time, to go looking for another man to lay on with the scourge, he was that worried by the persecution going on in his head, one time his thoughts saying that it wasn't water-grass and oak-falls, nor prayers at all hours of the night and day, nor scourgings and weltings by his own hand or the hand of another that he wanted, but a big temptation that he might be standing out against, and so be giving great pleasure to God Almighty. And the hunger of this great temptation became stronger day after day, till the prayer was never off his lips that God would send the devil back to him. Night and morning he would cry to God in his prayers: Give me my chance now. Give me another chance. And he spent a deal of time thinking of the words he would utter out against the devil, and he didn't take as much as a walk without a bottle of holy water to dash in the devil's face, or without a rosary to cast over him if he came near enough. Scothine had a plan how he would lure the devil near till he could lasso him with the rosary, like they lasso and catch the wild cattle in Mexico. Won't he give a kick and a lep when he feels it dropping over his ears, he kept saying to himself. For the rosary he had brought out with him had been blessed by the Pope of Rome, and while he was wriggling out of it, Scothine thought that he'd spit in his face and jeer at him, and call him names.

This prank that he was going to play on the devil made him as happy as a lark, until at last he began to say to himself: The year wastes after July, and I wish God

would give me my chance before the year is out. He hadn't forgotten that the devil came to him looking like a woman; and he was real vexed to think he had gone after her, for he wasn't sure by any means that he had the rosary in mind at the time. It was just curiosity, that's what it was, he muttered to himself, on his way to his favourite seat under the oak. Still, and all the same he was bothered and vexed, for his thoughts were like a swarm of bees in his head the way he couldn't tell himself what he was thinking about, one thought flying away and another one coming into his head at the same moment, so that there was never such a going and a coming in this world before. At one moment it was the great reward he would be gaining in heaven, and the minute after it was the great punishment he would be getting in purgatory, or singeing and grizzling on the hob of hell, for mind you, Scothine was not sure at all that if the devil had come along with horns and hooves, and a nose like a chimney, all smoke and smuts, and his tail hanging out, that he would have been so anxious to get up and go after him the way he went after the woman. I might have let my liver drop out of me with the fright, he said to himself, and I wasn't frightened a bit. How was that now? Why was it, said he, that I stood all up and down like a poplar-tree to look at a woman with her clothes off? He used to keep his eyes sideways and baw-ways when he was talking to a woman, the way he wouldn't see her, even if it was his own mother. . . . Yet the memory of this woman's larky eye, and the two breasts lifting out of her, could not be rooted out of his mind anyhow, nor the memory of her backside, that was like a great white mushroom, as she vanished away through the willows. But the breasts were better in his memory than all the rest of her, and maybe it's the breasts is the part a man has to struggle against if he wants to get the old soul safe for an eternity of happiness: God

above the lot; Jesus on the right-hand side, his blessed mother on the left, and all the angels parading around, and they having the great time.

While he was thinking these things he heard a splash in the water, and there he saw a girl with a pair of the finest tits a man could wish to be looking at. Scothine, thinking the devil had come back to him, felt in his girdle for the holy water and the rosary, which was to make the devil get into his own shape. He got hold of both these weapons against the Evil One, and he stole down to the edge of the river and made ready. Faith and troth, said he, that's not the devil, bad luck to it, but it's the eldest daughter of the female that lives in the cottage at the bend of the river. Up he lepped again on the bank and away with him to the ford, stepping gingerly over the stones, as a man must on his way to salvation, fearing he would be drowned before he was saved. Now, says he, to the woman who was feeding her pigs, leave feeding the pigs, let the pigs be, for I've come to talk to you about a thing that's more important than pigs. Sure, I can be listening to you while I'm throwing the food to the animals, and they ready to eat their own ourbeens off with the hunger, she said. Well, said Scothine, for there was nothing in his head but the idea of how to get a soft seat in heaven, a red and golden chair, with a doeskin pad filled with goose feathers: Is there another red-headed girl in the parish beyond your own daughter? There is not, she answered, not one with a head of hair like that head. She's in the river, said Scothine. She is so, said the woman, since the dawn of day, leaving me to do the work; she and her sister, as big an idler as herself, the pair of straps; up and down, and in and out of the same river they do be going, splashing about all the summer-time as if it was ducks they were, and not christian females. It's a great loss to me, the bathing. Did they go and interrupt your

Reverence, and they splashing, for if that's what you've come about, I'll give them a leathering when they come home, and it won't happen the second time. It isn't that, Scothine answered, that I've come to talk to you about, but to tell you this, that your daughter has a pair of breasts on her would raise great temptation in a man. That's the truth itself, the woman said; they're the fullest I've ever known on a girl of her age, as I'm always telling the clergy that comes here seeking a temptation. Is that the way it is? said Scothine. There's them have been after her before me. But which of them has that right to lie with her as I have earned myself by such terrible fastings and prayers in more woods and wildernesses than you could reckon on your fingers and toes? Who has a better right? Will you tell me that now? That much I'll say for myself, so you may send her to me, and to no one else. Why should I send her to you, more than to another? Distracted I am and moidhered with people asking for the loan of my daughters to be a temptation to the flesh, and it all comes from the sporting and tumbling they do be going on with in the river. I'll put a stop to it. I will so. They won't see water again as long as they live; they will not. My good woman, Scothine answered, don't be forgetting that it was God put the breasts on the women. Are you telling me that? said she. And what do you think he planted them there for? For she was one of them who wasn't backward in coming forward, even to the priests. For the suckling of babes, I always thought, but to listen to yourself—— It was for that surely, Scothine interrupted, and for more than that; for, let you deny it if you dare, that God in his wisdom knew about the temptation they might be before the children came, and what I've come for is to ask you to let me have the loan of your daughter to lie with me, for, from the peep that I had through the

bushes, her breasts are just the ones that might awaken the devil in me, if there's any devil left in me.

Woman is the temptation of the temptations, so I've heard, not from knowledge, mind you, having been busy till now with the conquest of my belly; all temptations rise out of the belly, the woman as well as the victual and the drink. The pleasure of food and drink I've passed and done with, for I live on water-grass from the spring and oak balls from the oaks, as well as you do yourself with the meat and the mead. Plain water I drink without as much as a wish rising in me for a slug of ale. Nor are the scourgings and weltings I give myself any use; my flesh doesn't heed them, and the man who would scourge yells out of me one time has left the country; gone he is, and here am I without a temptation to my name unless you let your daughter lie with me; you won't get out of it yourself, my good woman, unless you send her to me, mind you that; for it is on me you've got to reckon to be readying your place in heaven for you. And, said he, if I get lazy and lob around with my bum on a warm stone, I'll be in purgatory for my sins after you are dead yourself, and what's going to intercede for you or to bother their brains about you at all? Get me to heaven as quick as it can be managed, or maybe you'll howl in hell like a dog with hot water on his tail.

You're a great saint, Father Scothine, said the woman; you are so, and high enough will you be perched up in the kingdom of heaven without making a step-ladder of my daughter's two breasts. 'Tis on my shoulders you and your daughters will be hoisted up, that's the way it is, each one helping the other and the priests helping the most. You're wiser, I'm thinking, about the way to get a crown on your head than I could be, that have never known anything but a handkerchief tied under my chin, but I'll not be giving my daughter to lie with you. I will not; and there I leave it. God knows what

might happen to her in a sudden weakness such as we're all liable to, and it in the blood. Now, my good woman, I'm not sure if you're thinking about me or about your daughter. I think the thoughts are in my own head, and this I say, Father Scothine, that the sin is the same to the one that is atop as to the one that is below. You might be in the right of it, Scothine answered humbly, for he was one of those men who think the next one to him is wiser than himself, and to escape from the persecution of his thoughts, which were about him again like a swarm of bees, he turned away. Don't be in that much of a hurry, the woman cried after him. My curse on the bathing in the river, but I'll give you your chance the way we'll all get to heaven. Wouldn't it do you as well to lie between my two daughters? They would be keeping each other company in the temptations and helping each other to make it hot for you, and to keep out of it themselves. Ah, said Scothine, you're cutting my danger in two halves, and I the sort that likes to feel the bones and the brunt of the business, but since it cannot be, send me the pair of them to-night, and I'll have them again on Saturday week, and every Saturday from this on, if I feel the strength in me to stand temptation. Not a sparrow is hatched in the nest but the Lord provides food for it, and he will provide me with strength once a week to resist and hold out and get over the temptation. Send the pair of them to me at the close of day. Well, said the woman, when the priest was out of sight, heaven must be a great place, since a man has to go through all the fastings and prayers that Father Scothine has been through, and now he's putting his head into a noose. I must be telling Dare and Lalloc not to pull that noose too tight, or by this and by that, with breasts like Dare's even him that feeds upon water-grass and nuts, like a pet lamb, might be learning the tricks of a buck goat, and who knows that my girl might not fall in with him just

at the right time, and then there would be the devil to pay surely. But whichever way we look, danger there is, and the saint must have his temptations; he must indeed; he refused a shoulder of kid last week; he'd refuse anything, that man would.

As soon as her girls came up from their dipping she instructed them: they were to lie with the saint on Saturday night for the good of his soul, and as we are walking to Mass, says she, you'll be telling me what happened to you, without forgetting anything, or I'll break both your backs. Without forgetting as much as a nod or a wink, they answered her, and the story they told of the great fight the saint put up against temptation was so wonderful that she sent them up every Saturday night to him. And in this way Scothine rose every Sunday morning from his bed greater in the eyes of the Lord than the night before.

But you know, sir, there are bad tongues wagging everywhere, and when the news of the saint's martyrdom, and of miracles performed by him and the girls themselves, who came in to him with red coals in their bibs, the coals not scorching them at all, reached the Bishop, he began to scratch his head and to think he must try and put a stop to the talking. He sent his chaplain, one Brenainn. Can you tell me, Alec, what sort of man the chaplain was? I'd like to have the two priests before my eyes. Sure I can, Alec answered blithely. He was a spongy little man, with eyes like sloes, and great red lips that he kept licking with a big coarse tongue all the while. You could hear him licking, for he licked with a click, setting Scothine against him at first. But he was a friendly fellow, and the friendliness in his heart couldn't be held back. And he was a merry chap too, so these qualities made up for the looks which were against him, and it wasn't long before Scothine began to feel that life was lying easier upon him. The sun was shining into

the room, and the sweet air, going and coming in and out of the half-door, and Brenainn was telling so pleasantly that the Bishop didn't believe the report, but would like to have it from Scothine direct that he didn't lie every night between two girls with pointed breasts. Not every night surely, for the man isn't alive in Ireland that could be without his night's rest all through the week, and he in pain, in restlessness, and in such discomfort that I cannot put words on it, Brenainn. It is only the Mass I say on Sunday gives me the courage to bear up at all. So that is the story I'm to carry home to the Bishop? Brenainn said. That's the tale, and the story, and the truth. The truth is sometimes hard to believe, Brenainn answered; but, my dear Scothine, I do not doubt a word of it, and getting it from yourself, but those that get it from me—— What will they be saying? Scothine answered. But what matters it what they will be saying if I'm winning a place in heaven for myself? And let you be doing the same, Brenainn, this night of all nights, and God giving you the chance. Not a sparrow falls without his will, well you know it. It was for this you were sent here to lie between two girls with pointed breasts. Why not, he continued, if thereby you please God? Aren't we here for that? Brenainn turned his eyes from Scothine. You're not saying anything, Scothine said. And Brenainn, who did not wish to be behindhand, or to show himself a coward before Scothine, replied: Well, since you say there are two, I'll try it, and with the help of God I'll come out on the right side of the bed. Brave words are these, Scothine answered, but mind you, Brenainn, her breasts are round and white, for all the world like little mushrooms come up in the night at the ring of day, and her backside like a big one; and he kept on telling of her temptations, not to make himself out a great man for having overcome them but to frighten Brenainn, for though Scothine was the gentlest of human

beings there was malice at the bottom of the box, and he enjoyed the fear that he was reading all the time on Brenainn's face while he kept the talk going, asking Brenainn if there was any word in his parish about Brian Boru, who had come out of the forest with a remnant of his followers to redeem Ireland from the Danes. But it doesn't much matter to the story I'm telling what their talk was about. As likely as not it was stray talk, that people drop into when they have something else on their minds, and it went on until each felt he wouldn't be able to bear it much longer.

So it was a relief to both when the girls poked their heads through the half-door. But when they saw Father Brenainn up went their eyebrows, and round they popped, and away with themselves. Scothine called after them, but they were half-way across the field, and he had to pick up his cassock and go after them. You would run away, would you? You would leave a holy man without his temptation, you would do that? he was saying, as he brought them in. Sure we didn't know, Father, the girls cried out; and let go our ears, or we'll never give you a tempt again. Now sit you down, will you, and I'll give you a news will surprise the pair of you. How would you like to hear that the talk going round is that the three of us are living together in sin? Would they say the like? the girls yelped out together. Aren't there the wicked people to say the like of that, and we giving up all fun and diversion and breaking our backs to get here every Saturday night, and getting pains in our heads trying to torment yourself the way God may be pleased, and you holding yourself in? It's no work for a girl, or a pair of girls; it is not, and God knows it. That sounds like the truth, don't it? Scothine asked Brenainn. It does so, said Brenainn. That has the ring. I'm satisfied with that. And my little sister too, said Dare. Let you Lalloc here be telling the truth to the Bishop's legate,

about the temptations we've been giving to Father Scothine, and how hard put we were to keep them up and we wanting to go asleep. There's no need for her to tell him, said Scothine, for you'll be lying with him this night instead of with myself, and I'll back you to give him as good as you give me, and good you gave it. We'll do that surely, the girls replied. Isn't it plain to you now, Brenainn, that they are talking out of their own mouths and not out of mine? It's plain, Brenainn answered; it is plain. And he said he wished he was as sure of heaven as Scothine, but that he wasn't a bit sure, and he would have been out of the house and away on the minute if Scothine hadn't got a grip of his arm. The Bishop mightn't believe you, said Scothine; he might say, or there's them might say it for him, that we'd been fooling you up to the two eyes. Lie with the girls to-night; do the deed the way I did it, for only in that way can we keep our characters in this world of the tongues, and be straight with the Bishop. Out of your own sight and hearing, said Dare; and, wiping her eyes, Lalloc repeated: The only fair way, your Reverence. If you don't our characters will be lost for ever, and a girl without her character has no chance in life.

He'll do it, Scothine said, and, pushing Brenainn before him up the stairs, he called to the girls to light the censers. What are the censers for? Brenainn asked. We will pray together that strength may be given to you, and no sooner were these words out of his mouth than the girls came up the stairs singing a psalm, as was their wont when Scothine was the penancer, and after seeing that the bed was easy if Brenainn should escape from his tormentors in sleep, which might happen, for he had come a long way on foot, Scothine bade them all good-night and closed the door behind him, rejoicing, good man though he was, at the suffering and the trouble would be put on Brenainn that night.

But he wasn't more than half-way down the first flight of stairs when he was stopped by a sudden little whisper in his ear. It was his good angel come to tell him that he had been listening to his bad angel all the time, taking one for the other, as you can easily do if you're not careful, for the bad one puts on the whisper of the good one at times, and after listening for a while Scothine thought he ought to go and offer his peaceful bed to Brenainn and lie himself in the hot place, he being better able to bear the temptation. But there seemed to be a hand in the darkness keeping him back, pushing him down the stairs, and down he went step by step saying to himself that after all he wasn't putting anything on the man that he hadn't borne with himself; and asking himself why should he be patting himself on the back and thinking that he was a grander man than Brenainn. It is the evil angel surely putting these evil thoughts into my mind, he said; and it wasn't long before he was asking himself whether it was because he wanted to get the better of Brenainn that he had shoved him into danger. Get the better of Brenainn! Scothine cried out as he stood by his bed-side. Why should I want to do the like? But there's no help for it now, what is done is done, and there's the end of it, he said, and he lay down in the bed. But his thoughts kept him awake, tumbling over each other all the night like waves in the bay, so afraid was he that he might have done the wrong thing in landing Brenainn into the midst and middle of temptation, a thing which is permitted to no man to do, for no one knows another man's strength, only God knows that. But if the devil should worst him in the battle my prayers and fastings will be wasted, and it will be an easy job for him to lose the game with a girl like Dare lying alongside of him. But is that sure? She'll tell him if he gets wild that he must lift up the window and stand in the cistern till he gets cool; but if Dare should fall

asleep the devil may get hold of the little one, who would put her arms about Brenainn's neck and tempt him to sin with her, for she's but a child, and has no more than a smattering of religion as yet, and if Lalloc falls asleep Dare may stick a temptation on to poor Brenainn which his strength is not great enough to resist. We're all liable to strong weaknesses, Dare like the rest, like her mother Eve.

If I was wrong, O great and merciful God, in whose girdle is the key of purgatory's gate, tell me if I've done wrong in letting Brenainn lie in my place to-night. There's no key to hell's gate, I know, for it's always open; wide it is, and gaping, but it isn't hell that I've been deserving, for my act wasn't heinous, but only a while in purgatory, and out of that dismal place thou wilt give me a free pass. Well I've earned it by my fastings and prayers which are written down in the Great Book, and the days I spent on the crags picking up a gull's egg out of the nest or a clutch of dulce from the shore.

And when Scothine had come to the end of the prayers and his lamentations he gave a great cry out of him, and, unable to bear with his fears any longer, he jumped out of the bed, saying: I can stick it no longer. I must find out whether God or the devil got the best of it in the next room or if nobody won yet. But no sooner was he on his legs than a weakness fell upon him which he couldn't understand, for there was little strength in him and he couldn't as much as walk away from the bed. It seemed to him that it must be the devil was holding him back. Gripped I am and held I am, he said, and he was shaken with a great fear and a queamy feeling in the insides, so that he did not know whether he ought to go back to his bed or what to do. I'll pray, said he. I'll pray, for that's the last resource of the sinner, and falling on his knees he began praying, without knowing what he was

praying about, and his prayers went on and on, himself all in the dark about them. He didn't feel his knees under him, though the hours of the night were going by, nor the cold of the morning, though he was in his pelt.

CHAP. XXV.

THE sun had risen above the mountains and he was still praying that Brenainn might come out of the fiery furnace a better man than he went in. Dear God, let him not be tempted too much, he was saying to himself; not above his strength, dear God, for I've been thy faithful servant this many a year, and the temptation of pointed breasts and smooth limbs is great to a man of his years, although he be but a roll of lard to look at; he's young, dear God, he is young and unprepared for the temptation by a long diet of water-grass and nuts. Another long cry burst from him, and he was starting off on another prayer, when a knock come on the door. Scothine rose to his feet, and, thinking it was the girls come to give him news of Brenainn, he went to meet them. But it was Brenainn himself come to tell him that the girls had gone home an hour ago and that Scothine ought to be dressing himself if he was going to say Mass. I've stayed on a bit, he continued, so that I may be serving your Mass for you. You had a fine easy night of it, Scothine, he said, and have overslept yourself. Overslept myself! said Scothine. Why shouldn't you be oversleeping yourself, and you lying quiet in the comfortable bed? said Brenainn, and he turned away gloomily. The thought was in Scothine that the gloom on Brenainn's face might be the shadow of the sin he had committed during the night, but he said nothing about that, only: I'll be with you presently. Brenainn hadn't been out of the room long before Scothine fell on his knees again to pray to God that any sin Brenainn had committed might not be

visited upon him. But what's done cannot be undone, he said to himself: there's the end of that, he said, whatever way it went, and rising from his knees, and beginning to dress himself, he shouted over the banisters to Brenainn that he wouldn't be delaying long and that Brenainn might start off to the chapel and ring the bell.

CHAP. XXVI.

THE people up from the village, as they watched Scothine reading the Mass to the right and to the left, thought that his face was pale and full of weakness, and they feared he would be overcome and that Brenainn would have to finish the Mass for him. But he stuck it out and went right on. And when he came to the Communion it was a relief to him to put the Host on the tongues of Dare and Lalloc, for he didn't think they'd have taken it if there had been sin, and he continued to put his trust in God till the end of the Mass. And after the Mass the two priests went into the house and ate their breakfast without a word passing, until Scothine said: And what message will you be taking back to the Bishop about me? You're the greatest saint in Ireland, Brenainn answered, and that's what I'll tell the Bishop. I'll tell him that same. I hope that some part of what you say is the truth, Scothine answered, and he ate two or three mouthfuls of oatcake. In those days oatcakes was the breakfast fare, with a noggin of ale or milk, for not a drop of tea was in Ireland, as your honour knows, till centuries after. Scothine only drank water himself, but he had a noggin of milk to offer Brenainn, who seemed glad of it. He may be a saint after all, Scothine said to himself; and my innocence must be plain to him by the maidenheads of the girls; but he didn't like to ask Brenainn about the thing, though his heart was sick, and his thoughts were teasing him like bees, one stinging him

here and another there till he was stung all over. At last Brenainn said: Well, I must be going; the day wastes after midday and I've a long way before me. I'll take a cake along with me. Take two; take three or four; you won't be at your door till dark, and now the thought is upon me that your way through the forest is full of danger. You may be overtaken by the evening wolves, or you may fall in with robbers. What do you say to preparing yourself for your death by kneeling down there and making your confession.

Faith, he said, I will; and down he plumped on his two knees. Wait a bit, Scothine cried, till I get my stole, and when he had it on he was sure of knowing the truth. Now tell me, how did things pass with you last night? I didn't know, Brenainn answered, till the door was shut upon myself and the girls that I would have to lie with them and keep myself from temptation the best I could. Nor did I know if I'd be able, and when they were stripped, I said: Glory be to God, will I get out of this, or will my soul be roasted on me for the pleasure of a night? It wasn't so much the little one. I understand that, Scothine said; I understand that; get on with your confession. It was the big one that perplexed me and drove me as wild as a puckaun for the first half-hour. But the backside, the red hair, the round eyes shining like stars can be overcome by prayer, said Scothine. It's true, indeed, Scothine, but she was at me all the while, saying: For the temptation thou resistest to-night thou shalt receive a great reward in heaven. That's where you should have meditated on the cross, Scothine whispered. I did that, you may be sure, Scothine, and she, knowing my great torment, said: Keep on saying your prayers, or turn to my little sister, for she won't be stirring you up as I seem to do. But the little sister was asleep—— She was asleep, was she? Scothine cried out. She was that, and every moment I thought that I

was a lost man. Such restlessness, Dare said, is not in the bond. If you're as bad as this in the first hour, what will you be later on when I wake my sister and we begin the greater temptations? Are there greater ones than these? I asked. There are, surely, she said, and you must prepare for them by the tub, the way Scothine does when he's hard hit. The tub! I cried. Yes, she said; up with you and I'll show it to you. And taking me to the window she told me to climb into the cistern, and I stood in the cistern up to my neck for the best part of half-an-hour. It wasn't till then I was let back into the room, and the pipes were given to me. You can play them? Dare said. I can that, I said. And you stood the test of the dancing, did you? Scothine asked. For a while; but I had to make a lep for the cistern to prepare myself for the game of leap-frog, and the greater temptations. And you withstood them all without incontinence, voluntary or involuntary? I did so. Well, then, let us pray together, and let us thank God that you were able to keep the devil out of the bed, for I was afeared for you, and on my knees I prayed all the night long that you might be swung up to heaven in a golden scarf and not let down into hell on a black pulley. Brenainn, it may be that my prayers saved you. Why should you be taking all the credit to yourself, Scothine, believing, in your vanity, that you're the only man in Ireland that can lie with two young women without sinning with them, if you be not on your knees in the next room praying that strength may be given unto him? A sore place this would be for God to rest his eyes on if I were the only one, Scothine answered, and Brenainn turned his eyes on Scothine, trying to understand him. Then why were you praying for me? Hadn't you been with the girls yourself and didn't you know all their tricks? I've only dared the temptations after a diet of water-grass and acorns, but you overcame the temptation of the thighs

and the temptation of the breasts, and the feast of the eyes that the dancing affords, and the game of leap-frog, with a full belly, for I'm not forgetful, though I was at the moment, of the great big trout that we ate for our dinner. It was the thought of the trout kept you awake all night praying for me? Brenainn asked. It was that and nothing else, for why should you not succeed where I have succeeded? Scothine continued. And your thought all the time, my poor friend, was that I might lose my soul through you. That is so. I was asking myself all last night what would happen to me at all if my share of the thing had lost your soul, Brenainn. But let us say no more about it. You threw out the temptation after eating the trout, and it weighing two and a half pounds if it weighed an ounce. I couldn't get that trout out of my mind, and my conscience was sorely stricken that I should have led you into temptation after eating the trout, and all the night on my knees my entrails were wambling, and my head so light that I hardly knew what kind of prayers I was saying, the way they were coming and going like sparks from a smith's anvil. But I'm talking too much. Tell me at once that there was no incontinence. There was none, Brenainn replied. Then you're a great man and a holy man indeed, a great glory to Ireland herself; you're all that, and I'll shrive you this instant of the venial sins you've committed, for there are always venial sins, and it were better that the earth and sun, moon and stars should fall out of their places, and the skies be for ever empty, than that the least sin should be committed, so great is the least of these in God's sight. And Scothine began the Latin prayer, mumbling through it quickly, his voice getting clear at the words 'absolvo te.' And these being pronounced, Brenainn rose from his knees. And now, Scothine, one last question: Tell me, when we're in heaven together, will these two girls be given to me or will they be given to you? If

they're given to anyone, Scothine answered, his face clouding a little, they should be given to me. But you didn't resist them with a trout weighing two and a half pounds in your belly! Didn't you eat half the trout yourself, so there was only a pound and a quarter after all. Don't let us be arguing about what's going to happen to us in heaven, but do you be looking out and searching in your own parish for two other girls that may tempt you as mine have tempted you, and get you up into the front row. I'll do that if the Bishop lets me, but, Scothine, in heaven there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage. We've read that in the scriptures. You're a great story-teller, Alec, and I fell to thinking that the priests departed from each other in happiness, and with a little regret at the back of the happiness which neither could understand, so entirely without cause did it seem to both of them.

CHAP. XXVII.

WE had left Westport in plenty of sunshine, but as soon as we came to the great bog, lying between Westport and Loch Conn, squalls, charged with stinging rain, rushed down upon us from the hills, dun-coloured hills frowning under their cloud caps; and the road we were following seemed so unlikely to lead us towards woods filled with rhododendrons (now in their decline, my host said, as we started, the flush of June being over; a sort of evening hour of beauty gone, I cried back to him) that when I found myself crouching behind a turf stack for shelter, the suspicion rose up quite naturally that we were being befooled. Alec, I said, do you think Mr. Ruttledge is putting a joke upon us? Mr. Ruttledge isn't the man would make it a joke to send you off to Loch Conn for a wetting, Alec answered. I've never been in this part of the country myself, but I've heard of the rhododendrons,

and we shall be among them soon if your honour will have patience; you see the weather is mending, the clouds are lifting from the tops of the hills yonder. But the bog, I said. It seems as if it was going on for ever. That is the way with a bog, your honour; it ends and begins without any warning. I've remarked the same thing myself, I answered, and we trudged for two miles more, weary travellers at last rewarded by the sight of green hill-sides. Now wouldn't this be the domain Mr. Ruttledge was talking about? Alec asked, and my surprise was great, for the woods seemed to me to become more beautiful as we proceeded into them, rising steeply from the shores of the lake, and full, as my host had told me, with declining bloom, white, pink, purple and mauve, with one great tree flaunting so insolently over the ruin of the gate lodge, or steward's house or cabin (it matters not which, once a human habitation) that it was pleasant to pass into the demure woods; the world we live in being a green one, our eyes return to green eagerly after too much colour.

We had been told that we should find the Royal Osmunda by the lake-side, and the owner conducted us from terrace to terrace till we came to a plank bridge, a crazy structure that had been built out into the marsh; there were gaps in it, but with the aid of stepping-stones we reached the corner in which the great fern grew, but alas, it grew in such profusion that we took little pleasure in it and returned inland disappointed, depressed perhaps tells my feelings better. I shall expect you back at tea-time, the owner said, after giving us leave to roam his woods whither it might please our fancy, calling us back to advise an excursion to a ruin. We should find it, he said, if we followed the lake shore for about half-a-mile. But I do not know that it's worth visiting, he added on consideration; very little of the original convent remains. But the evening looks like clearing, and if you

meet an old peasant ask him to tell you the story of a nun who is buried there. I've only heard it hinted at. A saint it appears she was. You may be more successful than I have been; you see I'm a stranger, an Englishman living on good terms with the people but looked upon as an alien. We'll try, I said, turning my eyes towards Alec. A moment before it seemed to me that I had descried an awakening of interest in his face. He knows the saint's story, I said to myself, and hoping to hear it from him, I thanked the owner and entered his woods again; a beautiful and silent domain, I said, not a bird singing in it, for the rain is threatening still; a strange day, not a wave on the beach nor patter of hare or rabbit among the leaves. Sorra one, said Alec. And we walked idly to the little pier, almost forgetful of the ruin we had been invited to go in search of. A boatless pier, I said. What has become of the owner's boats? Alec was unable to answer me and we stood gazing across the lake. Not a gull, nor a sand-piper, nothing but the gaunt shores yonder. A lake famous for its trout, I added, hoping to tempt Alec into an observation. It was once the finest water in Ireland for trout, he answered, but it is no good since they got rid of the pike. But the pike ate the trout, I said. All the same, Alec replied, where there are no pike there are no trout: they've ruined the lake. He nudged me and pointed to a great heap of stones by the little pier. Stoats, he whispered, and in response to an imitation given with his lips of a rabbit wounded or in distress, four little red heads peeped out. The gamekeeper will be able to get them all by the end of the week; catch the bitch first and then the young ones will come looking after her and trot into the trap.

It seemed to me sad that the pretty litter of red animals should all be struggling in traps before the end of the week, and to rid myself of the doleful spectacle I began to ask questions about the ruin; a famous convent

it was, no doubt, in the years back. You've heard of it, Alec? I've heard of it surely, he muttered, and he walked on in silence through wet stones and tussocks and juniper bushes. A poor country, I said, grey lake and gaunt shores, naked everywhere save whence we have come. But Ireland was once called the island of woods. I've always heard it was here, he said, interrupting my meditation; and I found myself beside an ivied ruin. 'Ivied ruin' brings thoughts of naked gables, and of the ancient convent only a few mounds covered with ground ivy remained, but as we pryed about we came upon traces of walls that the earth had not yet overgrown. Yes, it was in this place, he repeated, that one of Ireland's greatest sons was done out. The story is coming, I said, but dared not ask Alec to continue it lest he might take fright. He came here from the wilderness when he was getting a bit too old to live on water-grass and cockles. You remember Scothine, your honour? He that put the great trial on Brenainn, making him lie between two virgins with round breasts and after dining him on a fine trout. Well, Moling was another such a saint as himself before he came to the convent, and there's no saying that he wouldn't be as high in heaven to-day if it hadn't been —ah, well, 'tis true what they do be saying, that no man is safe from temptation till he's dead.

There's a story on his mind without doubt, I said to myself, and I could listen to it with more comfort in these woods than on a gusty bog trying to keep my hat from blowing away. Don't you think, Alec, that we're going too far? I asked, and tea waiting for us in the house beyond. Faith, a cup of tea would be better than a blow of a stick, he answered cheerfully; but I thought your honour might like to see one more twist of the lake. I've heard of the view beyond that hill—— There are few things, I interrupted, more beautiful than a fine evening after the rain. Whatever your honour likes.

Perhaps the tea would be better, I answered, and as soon as we came to the ruined wall on our way back I began to examine it, without, however, putting any questions to him. I'm slow to go beyond this spot, said Alec, without getting down on my two knees, wet and all as the ground is. An ill-judged word might stop the story on his lips, and to say nothing at all might allow it to pass away. All but that corner wall has disappeared, I mentioned casually. True for you, Alec murmured, the ground has grown over most of the convent, all but her grave and the clay will never climb over that, for wherever there's been a great wickedness done there's a scar left. The story is coming, he will tell it, and how suitable these woods are for the telling of a story, these quiet, almost soundless woods, only the raindrops falling from the leaves, I said, and began to admire the architecture of the trees—tall boles of elm and beech with the hills showing through the top branches, and, I said to myself, the misted lake through the lower. A beautiful wood whose monotony is relieved by a rough pine—that one making a break in the pale greenery.

But the story Alec was cherishing of the saint who came out of the wilderness in search of temptations, like Scothine, but who, unlike Scothine, failed to conquer them, diverted my attention from the trees to Alec's anxious face, and putting together all my knowledge of Alec, gathered, it is true, in a week's intimacy, and adding to it my instinctive comprehension of what is lowly and remote, I concluded, rightly or wrongly, I know not which, but I concluded that outside of his gift of story-telling he differed little if at all from the first peasant that might catch my eye in Westport on market day; and that if I considered him closely I should discover that very little of his gift of story-telling is personal to him—to himself. But can anyone say: This much belongs to me and to no one else? Is not all

reflection and derivation? My refusal, however, was firm not to be led into this blind alley, and fixing my thoughts firmly on Alec, striving to see him steadily and to see him whole, as a good mid-Victorian should, I said: His gift of story-telling amuses me because it is new to me, but it is as old as the hills themselves, flowing down the generations since yonder hills were piled up. Sheep paths worn among the hills. His grandfather or grand-uncle, whichever the Dublin scholar was, trimmed these paths a little. Sheep paths, nothing else. Alec is a creature of circumstance, and like myself can be accounted for. He tells stories against the priests and nuns of the twelfth century, for these are not far removed, in his knowledge and imagination, from druids and druidesses. It was only a few centuries before the twelfth that the druids began to discard the oak leaves for the biretta; but in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries they were full-bellied Roman priests; by that time the word had become flesh; it is just touch and go if he tells me the story he is brooding over or refrains from telling it. I can do nothing.

On this thought I raised my eyes for another look at him, and as I did so Alec said: Mind he must have been one of the greatest saints that ever fell out in Ireland, for it was the great deed he did, saving a soul from the devil himself. I told your honour, as I should have done, that it was at the end of his life; he came out of the wilderness, where he had been along with the hermits since he was a bit of a gossoon living on cress and gulls' eggs. It was after twenty years of the tough eating that he came to rest his bones in the convent that you saw this day. A man between fifty and sixty, yet the diet did not seem to have taken a feather out of him, for his hair was as black as you like, and it hung down on his shoulders in fine curls, and the pair of eyes in his head were as shiny as a young cat's. A spare, wiry little man that no one

would believe to be so old. But it was just as I'm telling you. He came out of the wilderness between fifty-five and sixty to hear the confessions of nuns by the lake beyond; he came down from the crags above Old Head. You know Old Head, your honour. Mr. Ruttledge goes there every summer with the children to swim. It was there Moling had been living many a year the way I told you. A queer place it is too, and he thought that his rest was well-earned anyhow. But there was no rest for him in this world, poor man, from the day he waved his hat at the crags above Old Head, and came down at the trot to Loch Conn to confess the nuns of Cuthmore. And then didn't the bad luck start up in the most unlikely place, in the mind of Sister Ligach, as pious a one as ever wore out a pair of knees on the top of this earth. I've come, Father, she said, dropping down on the same bones, I've come with a great sin stuck in my conscience; but I've faith in the sacrament to relieve me. Well you might, said Moling, for you are the one got well instructed. On these words, he settled his stole and cocked his ear, and wasn't it a relief to him to learn that the only thing that was wrong with her was this, that she wasn't able to pray to the saints to put in a word for herself and the sisters in the convent. A light sin, surely, but being a priest he had to blame her, and tell her she'd be better off remembering the saints that stand by us when the word of death is in our throats, singing and praying round the throne of God to spare them that do be passing away from the world, or if that cannot be owing to mortal sin, getting their share of purgatory a bit easy.

After saying all this he thought he had done with her and that she would get up from her knees, but there wasn't a move out of her. My child, said he, what are you waiting for? Well, Father, said herself, what good would it be for me to be leaving you and I not making a clean breast of it? I confessed that I can't pray to the

saints any longer, but I've worse than that in my head. Well the priest puckered up his lips and a thoughtful look came into his eyes. No more than to the saints am I able to pray to the holy virgin to succour us. Are you telling me that you can't pray to the holy virgin, the mother of the blessed God! said the priest, and he in a fright. Not to herself who bore the son of God in her womb? It is like that, Father, indeed. The priest next to jumped out of his skin at that, and the chair he'd been sitting on fell behind him. Pick up your chair, Father, and hear me out, said Ligach, or you'll be sorry afterwards. I can pray to no one but to Jesus himself, said she. To no better could you nor anyone else be praying, said the priest; but don't forget that there is no one could put in a word better or quicker for you and for us all than his own mother. Tell me, my child, who would he be likely to be listening to more than to his own mother? To which Ligach replied: The truth indeed, Father, but I've no thought for anybody but himself, and there's no use giving a prayer when your thoughts aren't in it. I wouldn't say so far as that, said the priest, for by saying the prayers themselves the sinner brings himself under the rule of the Church, and the frozen waters of his heart will loosen and burst. It is as you say, Father, but you haven't heard all yet. I can't say a prayer at Mass; my thoughts aren't on the Mass that you're saying, but out in the garden.

At the words 'out in the garden' Moling's brow blackened, and maybe it was the quiet drawl of the girl got him on the raw as much as anything else. Is it that your thoughts are out gallivanting in the garden when I'm calling down God into the bread and wine? But, Father, isn't it much of a much? Isn't it the same thing? Jesus gave us the sacrament, and if I'm thinking of him I'm thinking of what is going on at the altar too. It is of the upper chamber in which he ordered the sacrament,

cried the priest, that you should be thinking; and it would be better still if your thoughts were on the miracle and me at it. My child, I'm afraid I don't understand you. I haven't got the rights of it yet. Well, it's like this, Father; all the time you're saying your Mass I'm thinking of Jesus on the cross, and he suffering great torments for me. A very good thought that is, Moling answered; a holy thought indeed; but you ought to be thinking too that it was himself ordered the apostles to celebrate Mass when he was gone. I believe all that, said Ligach, but it's the way that his suffering on the cross puts every other thing out of my head, for am I not his bride whom he will take in his arms? That's true for you, said the priest, but you mustn't be thinking too much of your meeting with him in heaven. It is well enough for you, Father, to say that, but 'tis of our meeting in heaven I'm thinking all the time, and there's nothing will ever get that thought out of my mind.

All the same I won't be refusing you absolution, said he. But, Father, will you be hearing me out first, for I've not told you the lot of it yet? A great part of my prayers to Jesus is that he will be giving me a sign, a nod of the head or the like. Faith, said the priest, I do not come to this place to listen to nonsense and rameis. Say your prayers and obey the rule, and let me be hearing the rest of the parish. How many more are there waiting to come in to me? Three of us, Father. And now, Ligach, if you want my absolution, bend your head; for you see, your honour, Moling was a hot-tempered man, and Ligach one of those that would work up a passion in the greatest saint in heaven. All the same, said she, I'd be glad of a sign. But what would the like of you be wanting a sign for? Haven't you heard that humility is the top of the virtues? Be off with you. But Ligach wasn't to be outdone. I'm afraid, Father, without a sign—— Without a sign of what? snapped out Moling. The day may

come, Ligach continued, when I shall not feel as sure as I do now that he suffered all those torments for me. I want to believe always and to be sure of it, never thinking of anything but my belief in the son of God our redeemer. You're wanting a lot and plenty, said the priest—to live on earth as we shall live hereafter in heaven. But it's not a bit too much, surely, when we remember the death he died, which I can never let out of my thoughts. You're a good little nun, said the priest; I used to be like that myself in the years back. You'll give me absolution, Father? Faith, I will, said the priest, startled, for he'd been away.

Other penitents were waiting; he shrove them all without giving much of his mind to their sins, for he was thinking of Ligach all the time, and on leaving the chapel who did he meet but Ligach and the Mother Abbess coming in from the garden, Ligach dripping like a spaniel that had been in the river. Father, cried Mother Abbess, I'll ask you to refuse her absolution if she doesn't give in and be biddable. Look at the way she is in, and you wouldn't guess where I found her in three guesses—in front of the cross kneeling down in a pool of water. See the way she's in—out there in the teeming rain, catching her death of cold. Go and change your clothes at once, my child, and remember that the first duty of a nun is to give in to her superiors. To back up the Mother Abbess, Moling said he never remembered so severe a winter, and when Ligach came to confess to him he wasn't a bit surprised to hear a bad cough. The cough was followed up by another, and before she could confess one of her sins, she was taken with such a fit of coughing and sneezing that Moling said: My child, that's the bad cold you've got, and a cough on the top of it. Yes, I suppose I got it in the garden, for it's been wet enough there lately. But didn't I hear the Mother Abbess tell you that you weren't to go there? You did, Father. But it was

for a sign I was praying, and if I do not get one I may fall into a worse sin than that of disobedience. Now what sign are you wanting? asked Moling. A sign that he is waiting for me in heaven. You've got a bad cold, a very bad one, the priest repeated. Faith, I have, but a cold is a small matter compared to what he suffered on the cross. 'Tis true for you, said Moling, but a cold may put an end to you just as well as a thrust of a spear. You wouldn't be comparing myself to himself, would you? said the nun. Of course not, the priest snapped out, and began to speak hard and stiff about her folly in wanting God to grant her special favours. You're sinning in the sight of God, said he, by endangering your life in the way you're doing. Be off with you now; and Ligach just bowed her head, and her cough was so bad as she left the chapel that the priest would have taken his words back if he could, and not being able to do that, he rang the parlour bell as soon as he had had dinner and asked for herself.

Now, said he to herself, Ligach has as bad a cough as I've ever heard in my born days, and the Mother Abbess answered: True for you, Father; it keeps us all awake at night. We can hear her all over the convent barking, and now there are three other sisters and the lot almost as bad as Ligach, and there will be more laid up, for be it wet or cold, they're all kneeling round the cross catching their full of cramps. Well, I was like that myself once; and Moling began to tell of the years he spent among the gulls on the crags above Old Head, and the twenty-three years in the woods living on water-grass. For thirty years I didn't sleep under a roof, but as the years go by we begin to weary of the things that we hung on to in our youth. But our lives are in God's hand; we belong to God, who has given life into our keeping, and expects us to look after it. I'm altogether of the same idea as yourself, the Mother Abbess replied, but it will be no change

while that same cross is left in the garden. A better place for it, said the priest, would be in the chapel. Now you've said it, Father, and as soon as we can get a little help we will have the cross—— Put up in one of the side chapels, the priest interjected. I'll show you the place.

And it was a fortnight after the shifting of the cross that Sister Ligach crawled out of her cell more dead than alive; the others were well before her. And what did she do? Out with her into the garden to kneel down in front of the cross that had nearly cost her her life, and finding it gone out of the garden, she cried: How are we to keep our thoughts from wandering from him who died for our sins and waits for us in heaven? Do we know that he got the best of health always when he lived on this earth? Not a word in the scripture; not a word. And such was her canter till Mother Abbess had to say: Now, Ligach, obedience is the first rule in a convent. But, Mother, think what he suffered for me and I not allowed into the garden for his sake. Well, that is my rule, said herself, but to make matters lighter for Ligach, she gave the young nun permission to rise out of her bed at eleven o'clock and go into the chapel and do an hour's devotion before the nuns rose out of their beds for matins. At which indulgence the tears came into Ligach's eyes, and she said: May the Lord have mercy upon you for that. It is all I can give you, the Abbess answered; make the best of it, Ligach. Faith and troth I will, and you won't be left out of the prayers, Mother Abbess. And every night Ligach was on her knees before the cross praying for a sign. But not the sign of a sign nor the ghost of a sign came near her, and when she next went to confession, she said: No sign has come to me, Father, and the temptation is always pushing me from behind. What temptation is that one, my child? the priest asked. The devil himself and not one of his bailiffs either, telling me always that if I can't

get a sign from Jesus, I must be getting one from himself, which would do me as well. My child, my child, do you know what you're saying? I do indeed, she answered, and I cannot help myself much longer. Every time the thought comes into my head I shake it and say: Hail Mary, but it doesn't help me at all. If I were you I'd give myself a pinch in some soft spot, said the priest, or a pin I'd stick into me when the temptation came around; here's one for Satan, you will be saying, as the pin goes into your thigh or your bosom; and if you aren't hurt enough push the pin into the sorest place you can find, under one of your nails, and if that doesn't stop the black fellow I'll have to put on my considering cap and think it out, but do what I tell you first.

It must be the devil, he said, as he walked home thinking what he could do to save her soul; and if, said he, his thoughts taking a sudden turn, I were a bit of a carpenter I might make something with a pulley that would let the head nod at her when she's on her knees asking for a sign; a nod of the head is all that's wanted to save her soul. Bad luck to it, for I am an unhandy man, said the saint—for he was a saint, or a sort of a saint, your honour, though a sinner into the bargain. I'm no good at carpentering; there isn't one in the town of Westport that could learn me in a year what the little boy playing among the shavings knows already. So I needn't be getting a pain in my head thinking about pulleys and the like. I'll get another thought soon, and a better one. Nor was he long waiting for a second thought; in five minutes, neither more nor less, he had it, and it frightening the life out of him—the queerest thought that ever came into a man's head, one that left him without a prayer to throw at the devil. Let me at all events be pulling myself into a shape of prayer, he said, and if the thought isn't driven off while I'm down on the knees, I'll know for certain it was sent to me by the Lord

Jesus—for what he was thinking was that he had just the figure for the deed. It is as like as not, he thought, his hair was as black as mine, he being from the country of the Jews, but they always paint him with fair hair. But maybe she'll be too deep in her prayers to take much notice of the colour of my hair, if any colour be showing. As soon as she lifts her eyes to me I'll give a nod of the head to her from above and she'll get enough faith out of that nod to last her till she's called up before the throne of God. But if she comes kissing my feet and begging me to come down to her it will be the great temptation I shall be overcoming, getting thereby a higher place in paradise than them gone before me; and for a chance like this one it was well worth my while to have come out of the wilderness.

The priest's thoughts broke off suddenly, and after one or two more turns up and down his garden he went back to the house with the fear on him that Jesus might not be wishing his cross interfered with. How do I know that it isn't Satan is tempting me? he asked, and going to the holy-water stoop he splashed nearly all the water in it about him. But aren't I the fool? said he; for why should the devil be prompting me to save a soul and he wanting as many as he can get hold of? It is God himself is putting this thought into my head, relying on me to outdo the devil, who has a mighty big wish on him at present to get Sister Ligach's soul, one of the beautifullest that ever looked out of a human face. A great prize she'd be to him, surely. The face of a saint if there be one walking about on two legs in holy Ireland. But if I lose my soul in the saving of hers! cried Moling. But it is the old boy himself that is putting that fear into my head, for who ever lost his soul while at the work of robbing the devil of a soul he set his heart on? I'll lead her out of the chapel quietly, and bid her tell no one. Risks there are, he said a few minutes after, in every hour of

life, but a holier one than mine, which is to rob the devil, I don't know of. Nor can anybody tell me it won't be Jesus himself that will be thanking me for the robbing on the day of judgment. . . . But I'm bet after all—how will I fix myself up on the cross? The image is nailed there—nails in the hands and the feet; but my feet aren't made of wood, and must have a support; and for my hands I must have two rings of rope, and Moling, not being much of a handy man, as I've said, spent many hours more than another would have done making them rings.

At last they were twisted and hidden away in the chapel, where he was himself at half-past ten, removing our Lord from his cross and fixing himself up in his place, which he had just time to do before Ligach came in to her devotions; and he might have dropped down from the cross so great was his fear that she might see the loin-cloth was missing from his body, for he'd forgotten it in his hurry, and, says he to himself, if Ligach wasn't innocent of the difference in the make of a man and a woman, I'd be fairly caught. But he was safe enough, Ligach having no thought but for him that is in heaven. Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise. Thou'lt not deny me a sign, said she, lifting her eyes to the cross; it will increase my faith in thee till thou shalt be in him that sees me, in him that I see, in him that speaks to me, in him that I am speaking to, in him that I hear and in him that hears me. And seeing and hearing naught but thee, so would I live and die aloof from all else, from the world. Dear God, I would be unto thee on earth as I shall be in heaven. A sign, a sign of thy love of me. A sign that will save me from the temptation of thinking that the devil would answer me if I were to pray to him.

On hearing them terrible words the priest took such a fright that he slipped his hands out of the ropes and came down to her, sure and certain that he'd be able to quiet her. But while he was telling her of the great meeting it would be for them both up in heaven, she kept saying: Am not I up in heaven now? the sparks flying out of her eyes all the time as you might see them in Jimmy Kilcoin's forge when he pulls at the bellows. Am not I Christ's bride? she kept calling to the poor man, trying his best to get to the holy water; and if he'd got there 'tis a different story I'd be telling, but the senses failed on him, and he no more than a yard off the stoop, and when they came back the nun was beside him in a faint so deadly that he mistook it for her death. It's a poor thing to be tempted like this, surely, says he; but no more than a venial sin can it be, for 'tis the intention that counts. But I must be attending to her, and it took a lot of sprinkling and calling into her ears that she must obey him before her lips opened and she muttered: Thy will be done, Lord. Open your eyes, Ligach, said he; and she opened them, but only to see what she was minded to see, and, led to the door of the chapel, she heard him say: What has fallen out this night must be kept to yourself. One word of it to anybody and the sign that you got to-night will lose its power, and the blessing will be changed into a curse altogether. Return to your cell, Ligach, and close the door behind you.

And no sooner was she out of the chapel than the priest put the image back and made off with himself in the great fright of his life, as well it might be, for by dint of what had passed he didn't seem to know himself rightly at all; his thoughts were all astray, and he couldn't get them together in his poor head. At one moment he was thinking that he had planned the lot from the beginning, and the next that if he hadn't got down off the cross and made her his bride she would have come to her right

reason and found out what a trick he was working on her. Her faith would have gone for good and all, he cried out, and instead of saving a soul I'd have well damned one for ever. As soon as she came to kiss my feet, I was bound to come down. But the rest? All right from her side, but maybe my soul is lost. But it is the intention that counts; and all night he was asking Jesus if a sin committed with a good intention could be a sin. The sins of the flesh, he began again, are small ones compared with the sins of the spirit; her sin was of the spirit, mine was of the flesh. The flesh has redeemed the spirit, a thing which doesn't often happen, for it is usually the spirit that redeems the flesh. But in this world things often fall out contrary-like. She won't tell anybody, not even myself, he murmured; she will keep her sin dark; but there was no sin on her side, only on mine, and on mine but a venial sin, if my intention was to save a soul, which it was, and a man should be judged by his intentions, so it is said.

CHAP. XXVIII.

BEFORE long it seemed to the nuns that Moling hurried them up in their confessions; they missed the bits of kindly reproof, and left him wondering, saying: His mind is off; our sins don't seem to matter to him. It's your turn now, Ligach; and seeing a light on her face that made them think of the sun shining on the sea, they said: What's wrong with Ligach this time? Father, she said, dropping on her knees, a sign has been given to me, and a greater one than I hoped for, and, the nun went on: He came down from his cross and took me in his arms. But no sooner were the words across her lips than a great fear and a great fright came over her. Oh, but I've been told not to speak of all this; he put a bond on me, and I've broken the bond. It would have been

broken, the priest answered, if you'd spoken to anybody but myself. Every secret is safe with me. Don't you know the seal of the confession has never yet been broken and never will be? But, Father, a bond was put upon me never to reveal what passed between us by himself at the door of the chapel. Am I not the representative of Christ on earth? Moling asked, and when you tell me what happened between you, you're telling it to himself. Haven't I the power to bid him come down from heaven into the bread and wine? Must he not obey? I know that, said Ligach, I know it well. And don't I absolve sins that are committed? 'Tis true for you, said the nun. But it is hard to tell. He came down from his cross, and he took me in his arms, and made me his bride in life as he will afterwards in heaven. 'Tis a great honour he did to you, surely. It is that, she replied, and one that I wouldn't have dared to think of if it hadn't happened to me, but it is just as I told it to your Reverence, just as I told it, and no way else. But not a word out of you about this, cried the priest. I won't say a word, Father, Ligach replied, for I was told not to. And now, said Moling, I'll be giving you absolution. But would you be giving me absolution for being visited by himself? I forgot that, said the priest, but mind what I'm telling you: Let not a word out of your mouth to anyone of this, or he'll never visit you again. Visit me again? said Ligach; what would he come to me again for? though indeed I'd be glad if he did. The priest did not answer, and she repeated: For what, I'm asking you, Father, would he visit me again? And the priest still not saying a word she kept on at him. For what, I'm asking you? for why should he be treating me different from Mary, who was visited only once so far as the scriptures goes. True, true, said Moling, he will never come to you again. But something will come to me, for it wasn't for nothing he came down from his cross. Time will prove me right.

I was forgetting, said the priest. A strange thing to be forgetting, a thing that doesn't happen once in every thousand years, she replied.

CHAP. XXIX.

WHAT did she say, Moling asked himself, when Ligach rose up from her knees and left the chapel; what did she say about expecting? Will there be a child? he asked. And on his way home he asked himself if he came down from the cross because he was afraid that if Ligach did not get the sign she had been praying for so long her belief might fade. Did she not tell him that the temptation was pressing her from behind that if she addressed herself to the devil she'd get an answer? O Lord, have mercy upon me, he muttered, and he knew that all the colour was out of his face, and that his hand was trembling. I'm bet and bothered with it all, said he. If I've sinned, forgive me, Lord. But who is to tell me if I be in mortal sin or venial sin? Not a bishop in Ireland could tell me that, nor the Pope of Rome himself, for what happened last night never happened to anybody in this world before. He walked on a bit and then stopped again. I'm the most miserable man in all the world, and will not be able to pull through this business. He went on walking ahead, mile after mile, without a prayer in his heart and his thoughts tormenting him, buzzing in his poor mind like flies, stinging him, stopping him in his walk, making him drop his knife and fork out of his hand when he was at his dinner, leaving him staring across the room, thinking of the good days he spent with the hermits living on water-grass, and the better ones when he was on his own picking seagulls' eggs from out of the rocks. Them were fine days, he said, and I had the good health then, but it is all going now, though I'll not be what you would call an old, ancient man for a good while yet. It

is the fear that I am in mortal sin is destroying me and wasting my bones. And then he would stop to ask himself what she meant when she said that something would happen to her. Was it a child? Of course it was that same, and he hadn't much longer to wait for the news from herself in the convent. Father, I think I'm with child. Women that live in chastity are often troubled with fancies, and to speak of such a thing and it not the truth might—— How could it be else, said Ligach, he after coming down from his cross to me? All the same keep it to yourself till the child leaps in your womb, if 'tis there he is, he said to her, and to himself: The news will soon be out; the nuns will soon know all about it. Highly favoured, they will say, is our convent. And, Ligach, now will you be telling the others that I can hear no more confessions to-day. Oh, my Lord Jesus Christ, cried Moling, as soon as the nun closed the door behind her, the torture is in the waiting! And from that day out he'd be saying: Another day has gone by and I'm one day nearer to the day when the Mother Abbess will come with her nuns, Ligach in the middle of them, to tell me about the great miracle: Ligach in the family way though she has never known a man.

The weeks went by and he counting them till the week came when he said to himself: She must be seven months gone, yet the nuns haven't come to me, though her appearance is great. As these very words were passing through his mind the parlour door opened and in came the Mother Abbess, surrounded by her nuns, with Ligach in the middle of them. Father, said the Mother Abbess, we have come to tell you something you will find it hard to believe, yet it is true. It's a miracle, surely, said Moling, after he had heard the Mother Abbess, and at these words the nuns were so overjoyed that they linked their hands and danced round Ligach for all the world like a lot of children. It is not for me, said Moling, as

soon as a little quiet had been gotten, to discourage your faith in the miracles that God grants to us sometimes so that we should not altogether forget him, but I call upon you to be mindful that you all keep this a secret among yourselves, for if the miracle you speak of should not prove to be as great a miracle as you think it is, we shall be—— But, Father, they began, it is either a great miracle or it's no miracle at all, and you're the last man that should say a word against Ligach. I am indeed, said Moling, the very last in the world; her sweet face tells that she knew no kind of man any more than the virgin herself did till the birth of our Lord. But in this world it's not so easy to find believers; there are always gabby tongues, and this neighbourhood is not freer from them than another. But who, Mother Abbess asked the priest, would say a word against our little Ligach, whose conception is as miraculous as Mary's? and the priest, without a word in his chops, stood looking at the nun. Her conception is certainly a great mystery, he said at last, and until we learn more about it my advice to you all is to keep this secret from everybody. But, said the Mother Abbess, what do you mean, Father Moling, when you say till we know more about it? Well, this is what I mean, said he, that the boy himself will be proof enough of his miraculous birth when he grows up. Let us hope so. But we don't know, said Mother Abbess, whether it will be a girl or a boy. A boy, a boy, cried the nuns, clapping their hands, and they began to argue that it could not be else than a boy, for that no woman had ever borne a girl miraculously. Oh, said the priest, I'm afraid we're travelling on a road that will carry us into a fine heresy; but after thinking a while he saw he was mistaken, for St. Anne herself wasn't conceived miraculously, only without sin. There will be a child for sure, but, as I've told you already, until we learn more about it, I'd be advising you to speak to none about the miracle that

God has been pleased to work for us. The Mother Abbess was of the priest's way of thinking, and having gotten a promise from them all in the name of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the priest said to himself: Well, God knows how all this will turn out, and we must leave it to him.

At times he was tempted to hope that she might die, for only her death and the death of his child could stop the scandal; but he was a saint as well as a sinner, and every time the thought came he shook his head, for he knew it was the devil that sent it, and he kept the holy water going about him all the time. His real torment was that, thinking over the reason for his sin, he didn't know if he was guilty of a mortal sin or venial sin, or of no sin at all. Be this as it may, he often said: I'm doing a good share of my purgatory on the earth, and these were the words he was speaking to himself the day the Mother Abbess came into him with the joyful tidings that Ligach had been delivered of a fine boy, and with no more than two hours' trouble before he came: no more than a little uneasiness. Didn't we tell you, cried the nuns, that Ligach would bear a boy and not a girl? and the priest, not knowing what to say to all this, asked if the child was a weakling; and, a bit surprised that he should ask that, the Mother Abbess answered: There's nothing weak about him barring that he has a strong weakness for the breast, even if it was a virgin bore him into the world. Is a virgin's child different? he asked, not knowing very much what he was saying, and the two of them fell to talking of the christening, which was to be at the end of the week, the priest thinking his mind would be easier when it was over. But from this hour out he never got an easy minute, and he put in a week before the christening thinking of his sermon, which would all be about miracles and mysteries. Said he: I mustn't say a word against one or t'other, for the sisters are right in this, that to say her case was not miraculous

is much the same as taking away her character and she a nun enclosed in the Convent of Cuthmore. And he began to think of the men they'd suspect if the miracle were denied, but he could think only of the gardener and the gardener's boy. No one, he muttered, would believe that Ligach—— The nuns won't be cheated out of their miracle, and the best I can do is to persuade them to let the child be put out to nurse. We can say it was found by the convent door; left there by someone that didn't want it. A moment after, he remembered a woman down the road who had lost her child: She would be glad to rear it for us, if Ligach—— But will she consent to be separated from her child? And the nuns give in to part with it? Not a chance of it, poor childless women, and they are looking forward to this child, and not one of them but is already a mother in her heart; the most I'll be able to do will be to get them to promise to keep the secret of Ligach's miraculous conception to themselves till the boy begins to show what sort of a man he'll be stretching into; and mind you, he kept on telling them, for though the way she got him is a miracle we don't know for sure and certain who he was got by. But, Father, would you have us think that Satan had a finger in it? cried the Mother Abbess, and the nuns dropped their hands and eyes. I'm the last man in the world who'd be putting a sore thought into your minds, said Moling. I'm all for taking things easy, saying nothing about the miracle and letting him grow up naturally without any cramming up of Latin and Greek. But, Father, he must get the education.

The priest heaved a big sigh, for he knew well there was to be no rest for him on this earth, and hardly was the boy four years of age before he could read his native Irish tongue, and when he was seven or eight he could con the Latin and Greek; and between ten and eleven he was running down to his father's house taking out the

books into the garden, reading and learning and refusing to be a shepherd or a carpenter or a blacksmith. Not one of the decent trades that Moling offered him could he be got to take up. It was only books that he had a thought for, and it was great delight to the nuns when he began to read the scriptures to them, and he only fourteen years of age. After this proof of his learning there was no holding the good sisters, and nothing the priest could say could stop their blabbing tongues. One and all of them went about telling how the boy had given out the scriptures to them in the Greek and the Latin, asking if that wasn't sign enough that a great prophet he would be in time to come: One who would hunt the heretics out of Ireland? Prophet! said the priest, who was now at his wit's end to quiet them. And what would there be wonderful in that? said the Mother Abbess. Only this, said the priest, if Ligach conceived miraculously it would not be a prophet that she'd bring into the world but a Messiah; and no sooner were the words out of him than he saw he had made a mistake, for, as the Mother Abbess put it to him and to the nuns, by means of the Holy Ghost God begot a son that was neither greater nor lesser than himself, and full equal to the Ghost. But we're not asked, said she, to give in that the Son, with or without the help of the Ghost, can beget himself a son? Sure, being God, the priest answered, he could do anything. That is so, said the nun, but this is the vexation: have we got to believe that our little Martin is God's grandson? If we believe him to be a grandson aren't we upsetting the Trinity, a thing that no person here would have hand or part in? Bothered and badgered we are, thinking out the same question, and I'd like to know if the doctrine, as I'm giving it to you, will hold good at the Court of Rome.

Well, now, said the priest, I'll think that over, for it's a tough point indeed, and one that won't be untied in a month of days, with the parishioners dropping in, to say

nothing of yourselves banging away at my door on one business or another. A knotty point which a man must give the whole of his head to. And where, would you tell me, can a man give his mind to a deep matter like the Trinity, unless it's in the wilderness that I came out of years ago, and where I am going back to think the whole thing out? If I make any head on it I'll come back with the news. But the nuns were very fond of Father Moling, and at that they started in to weep and wail and cry aloud, a fair keening it was; all ochon ceo go deo, and woeful is the day, very distressful to the priest, who, to quiet them, reminded them of the forty days Jesus spent in the desert. We'll pray that God will not keep you waiting, cried the nuns. And I'll make a prayer too, he said, that will be the dead image of the one you're making, and now my blessing be upon you all, and on our little Martin, whom I give into your charge, and if you don't see my face again—— We will, we will, they all cried, for be the word, and the Mother Abbess took a grip and a swing out of his cassock, but he hauled it off her with a rip in it maybe, and their eyes rested on him for the last time as he stood for a moment at the edge of the wood with his bundle on his shoulder, and he waving a farewell sign to them.

May God speed him, cried the Mother Abbess, on his way, and help him to untie the knot, for it's a knot of the knots, and I'm dead sure that he is too old to stand the hardships of the wilderness, with them joints and them bones. May God send him back safe to us, said another nun. I'm thinking now, said the Mother Abbess—— And the nuns cried out to know what she was thinking. What will we be doing ourselves without a priest and he gone? Without confessions, without Mass we will be lost entirely. True for you, said a nun, and the others added: We never thought of that, Mother. We'll have to write to the Bishop, and tell him of the loss of

our pastor, who has gone into the wilderness to think out a hard bit of doctrine, one so knotty, said the Mother Abbess in her letter, that he may be away for long enough. So we should be glad of a temporary priest if it would be convenient to your lordship to send us one.

CHAP. XXX.

THE man that goes into the wilderness in his youth returns to it in his old age, and I doubt if they'll ever see him again, the Bishop remarked, as he passed the letter on to his clerk. A man of seventy-five hasn't got it in him to spend his nights on the hill-side in draughty huts. But no more than that did he think about it, except, of course, to send them a priest, and when the priest came, Manchin was his name, the first talk was about the disappearance of Moling into the wilderness, and the great and holy man that he was. The last words his lordship spake to me, said he to the nuns, were: The wilderness is no place for a man of his age, and all the nuns cried out that they thought the same. But there was no holding Moling with them for the knot he had to untie—— What knot? said Manchin. And bit by bit the story came out, the priest's face getting more and more troubled and queer-looking, till at last the Mother Abbess cried out; I can see by your Reverence's eye that you'll have none of the miracle, and that you think our little Martin is somebody's leavings. I wouldn't be saying that, said the priest, and he had a long talk with Ligach, who gave him the story as well as she could for the water in her eyes, and she guessing that the priest didn't swallow much of her story; and afterwards he wrote to the Bishop saying that a great heresy might arise out of this story that was going the round, and a great many souls be lost in it. The Bishop was fairly put out by the news, and

wrote to his brother bishops, and seven or eight of them came, and they went at it.

The news had travelled far and wide; pilgrims were coming all the time, the whole country was talking of the miracle, and nothing else. As the bishops didn't want to disappoint the people there is no knowing what mightn't have happened if, just as the bishops were leaving, their mitres on their heads and their crosiers in their hands, three long-bearded old men hadn't come down out of the wilderness and begun talking. The story they had come to tell was that Father Moling was doing penance for the great sin he had fallen into in the years back with a nun of the name of Ligach, whom he had deceived and had a child by. Enough, enough, cried the bishops; it was God sent you, lest a great heresy should eat the Church the way a wolf eats a lamb. And the nuns and the bishops and all the country went after the Archbishop into the church, which was fuller that day than it ever was before or since.

Well this is the way it was: the Archbishop began to tell them out of the pulpit that it must have been God sent the three hermits with the news of Moling's sin, and that they didn't come a bit too soon either, for they, the bishops, were about to give it up as a bad job without coming to any judgment, none of them liking to say a word for or a thing against the story of such an out-of-the-way miracle as a miraculous conception, though there wasn't a man jack of them but agreed that such a thing was less likely than one of the little miracles the Church is always willing to accept, such as the curing of palsy with a touch, the giving back of sight and hearing with a spit, the setting of one that has not been able to go about without crutches for years on his feet again; for not like any of these little miracles are the greater miracles, such as the lifting of a dead man alive out of his tomb, or a woman that has never known a man bearing a child;

these great miracles were done once in the Eastern world for the saving of the world. So it isn't likely that God would let his greater miracles happen again: for if a woman bore a child all by herself, or if a corpse lifted himself out of the tomb alive, the great truth of the Church would not be the plain pikestaff that it is to everyone that cares to open one of his two eyes. You may be sure and certain, my brethren, you may give in to it once for all, that no woman will get a child that way again, and whosoever says she has done it is just trying to disturb people in their faith. It is with sorrow that I give it out, but Father Moling was guilty of the crime; but let it be remembered always that he was punished for his sin year in year out, day after day, minute by minute, expecting all the time, and sure and certain of it, that something would happen to drag the secret out of him, till at last he could bear the torment no longer and took himself off to the wilderness to pray for forgiveness.

The people were reminded by the Bishop that God had forgiven Moling, and that they were bound to believe this, for Moling had confessed his sin and sent three holy men with tidings of his confession to them, the only thing he could do to make up for his sin. The three holy men will tell you of Moling's repentance as they heard it from the lips of Father Moling himself. They will stand up. Up the hermits, said he, but not a hermit of the hermits moved, and as nobody stirred the people began looking here and there for the men, but they were not in the chapel, and so the Bishop sent out to see if they were in the yard. But they were not in the yard either, and all the news that they could get about them was from a shepherd who had seen them sloping away with themselves into the wood; thinking, the Bishop said, their mission was finished. Which it was indeed. All that was wanted, he went on, was proof that no miraculous conception had fallen out in this parish, and they

had that. I would have liked you all to hear the story again from their lips, but it isn't the will of God that you should: for these holy men have gone back to the wilderness they came out of.

The Bishop was a great hand at a sermon, and he said much more than I'm telling your honour, and would have said more than he did if a commotion had not begun in the chapel, Ligach suddenly falling faint or dead, it wasn't certain at first; so white and still was she, that many began saying that the news that her son was a by-blow had finished her. Water was sprinkled on to her face, and she was well rubbed; they got a drop of whisky between her teeth, and as soon as she opened her eyes the Bishop began to take pity on her, and he told the people that she wasn't a bit to blame nor a scrap in the wrong. She had been, he said, a victim, and next door to a martyr, but a victim she was, one of Satan's many victims, for the devil never flinched from doing a big wrong if he could only get his own way, which, in this case, was the soul of a man who, until he gave in to temptation, had been a good man and a very good man; one who had left the wilderness because the health failed on him, who had sinned, but we must not judge a man by a single case, but by his whole life; Moling had sinned, not a doubt of that, but he had gone back to the wilderness to repent, he had not hummed nor hawed about it, old man though he was, and the Bishop churned on till Ligach had another faint.

This time her son carried her to the door of the church, putting back all the people who would help him, saying to them: Let none lay a finger on my mother, I am here to care for her and to stick by her. At the chapel door he kissed her and at that she opened her eyes, and they put words in his mouth, and leading her back till they were on the threshold, he stood up to the Bishop in the pulpit, asking his lordship was a story told by three hermits to be believed rather than the story that the nuns of

Cuthmore had known to be true for the last fourteen years. If the hermits had the rights of it why have they disappeared like evil spirits? he asked, and the people thought well of that, and the priests were frightened. Let the Bishop call the hermits back. At that the Bishop interrupted Martin, and said that he didn't know a thing about these hermits. Then why, asked Martin, do you believe them before the words of every sister in this convent? Women my mother lived with from her young youth, always known to them to be as pious as any nun of the nuns, often going stricter than the rule of the convent in her wish to please God, putting her life in the danger too. My mother's life is well known, so it is, and you said yourself, my lord, that a man's life ought not to be judged by a single deed. Why then should the whole of my mother's life be struck out as nothing? No one accused your mother of sin: we hold her to be blameless, cried the Bishop from the pulpit. And by that you hold her to be a silly woman who believed a living man got up on the cross and let on to be God himself. My mother has never been known as an omadhaun, and if it was true would not the hermits have stood their ground here and had it out with me? If they went off with themselves it is because they were afraid of my questions! Let them be called back here if they are hermits itself, coming here and dropping their bad egg and skedaddling off with themselves. All the people gave in to the rights of that, saying: True for you, my boy, more power to the gossoon, and who hid the hermits?

The mistake Martin made was speaking of the hermits as if maybe they weren't hermits at all; for that gave the bishops the handle they wanted and they called on the people not to hear another word from the man who accused the clergy of calling the devil to give a hand, which was the way the clergy got the people over to their side, and seeing that he and his mother hadn't a

defender in the world, Martin said: I'll go on the track of the hermits and I'll bring Father Moling back with me too, and he'll tell you that the three hermits told a lie. So off he went with himself into the wilderness, and if I were to begin to tell your honour of the adventures he met and the queer things that happened to him we'd be here until the day after to-morrow morning; for Ireland was a wild place in the days gone by, and it was through the wildest parts he had to be trotting his boots in search of the hermits and Moling, looking for them in the forests and glens, along the naked seashores and from lake island to lake island, but sorra sight or light he could get of one of them, for Ireland is too big a place for one man to go visiting the whole of it; and it was with a belly full of disappointment and a grown man that he came again to Loch Conn, the only place in the wide world he had a memory of. His heart was sick and sore, I'm telling you, as he stood in the place you stood in to-day, your honour, and he looking on a few ruined walls. Is it, says he to the goatherd that was passing by at the time, is it that these walls are all that are left of the Convent of Cuthmore? There was a convent here one time, I've heard tell of it, the goatherd answered; but the nuns left it years ago because a nun of them thought she had been put in the straw by the lord himself, but it turned out to be by a robber that came through the chapel while she was praying before the cross. The woman that is buried here was my mother, said Martin to the goatherd, and I have gone Ireland up and down and back and forth for the last seven years of my life, through forests and mountains, trying to come up with the hermits that brought the news that killed her. Bad and real bad the same news must have been, said the goatherd; what kind of news was it at all, and it that deadly? It was the news that Moling, who was the priest in the convent while my mother was carrying, went to the hermits in the

wilderness to repent his sin, and confessed to them that he was my father, and they came along afterwards and told the bishops. It's not likely at all, said the goatherd, for who ever heard in the world of a confession being told; if Moling had told that to the hermits they couldn't have told it to the bishops, and you can take it from me that if the nun buried under this stone was your mother indeed, then your father was a robber that done a climb in through a window on a dark night and played his trick! Not a bit of it, said Martin, and a great argument and a great row began between the pair of them, and how it would have turned out I don't know, only that the goatherd had to make off after his goats.

As soon as he got the one hobbled that was setting the others astray, he came back to ask Martin who the this and the that was his father, if it was neither the priest nor the robber, and they must have talked a bit before they separated: but the man my grandfather had the story from, and who got it from his father before him, told my grandfather that Martin believed his soul had come down from a star and went into Ligach's body while she was at her prayers—it's the queer thoughts do be in the heads of them heretics. Heretics, Alec? Heretic he was, sir, surely, though I wouldn't be saying anything about the soul coming down from a star, for can't the power of the devil work up above as well as down below? But he told the goatherd that his mother's name was under his own special care, and that everybody would believe in her virginity, for it was part of the new religion he was going to set up, with himself at the head of it. And the new religion? I asked. It is said that Martin went off to Germany, Alec answered, and that he got married there to an escaped nun, for you couldn't set up a new religion or do any of them tricks in Ireland. Are you telling me, Alec, that he married Catherine Bora? That might be her name indeed, for the religion

itself was no better than a whore. You don't mean that Ligach's son was Martin Luther? Faith, I wouldn't be saying anything or too much, and we standing at the edge of her grave, still and all the German Martin might easy have been one of the sons of our Martin, but here's the grave beside us, and you have the story as well as I can give it to you.

CHAP. XXXI.

AN excellent tea awaited me in the parlour, cakes of different kinds and many various jams, and Alec was speaking in praise of the tea he had been served with in the kitchen, when Mr. Ruttledge's car came to fetch us. Its arrival was opportune, for another ten miles' walk, and five of it through a gusty bog, was more than I should have cared to undertake in the days of my youth, and now I looked forward to leaning back among comfortable cushions, and following in imagination the young man as he strove through the uttermost of night, hearing the stars, as he ascended the hill-sides, telling him that his mother's womb was quickened by a celestial visitant —an explanation of the mystery of his birth which he received eagerly, for he was one whose mother's virginity was dearer to him than his own life; one who would forgo his life rather than possess it at the price of his mother's maidenhood: a sentiment commoner than we think for, for who amongst us is there that has not looked at his father with hatred, or a grudge, in his heart? A story, I said, that would have won its way into Pater's heart; and I fell to thinking how he would have written it, beginning perhaps: And oh, the pity of it! the young man returning to the Convent of Cuthmore after long years of vain searching for Moling and the three hermits, only to find her grave—her grave and his birthplace (the goatherd had told him that Ligach was buried in the cell

in which she had lived all her life) and to stand by it, hopeful, looking on himself as the vindicator of her sad cause, his life devoted to that end—a long knight-errantry—and on the religion he would found as the warrant he needed of her virginity and his own Messiah-ship!

A beautiful story, I muttered and, catching sight at that moment of Alec's face, out of which all expression had vanished, I said: When he is not telling a story he is as common, as witless, as any man picked out of the streets of Westport. How very strange! and how unimportant! Not himself but his beautiful story is worth considering—the beautiful story whose origin we must seek further back than the Middle Ages, whose counterparts we shall find certainly amongst the rudiments of the world; in the story of Balchus, who visited Semele's grave before he set forth on his pilgrimage to found a new religion, and in the story of Hippolytus, the son of Hippolyta, the Amazon queen who fell in love with Theseus, King of Athens, for he too believed his mother to have been a virgin who was impregnated by some starry influence as she lay sleeping in a mountain cleft. Alec, I cried, irritated by the sight of his impassive countenance, your story revives my interest in the Celtic Renaissance, and when I return to Dublin the first person I will tell it to will be dear Edward; it will strengthen his belief in the Renaissance. Who might he be? said Alec.

CHAP. XXXII.

ALEC accompanied me to the wicket, and before parting with him I said once again: I'm sorry I shall not see you all next week. You've told me some wonderful stories, and without doubt are the great shanachie of Connaught. Many's the one that has said the same to me, your honour,

but if they were right itself, it isn't much of a brag to be above those going up for the competitions with no more than two and three and a half a story between the lot of them; and the fellows stuttering and stammering them out. But, compared with the shanachies that were in it in the old time, your honour, I'm not so much maybe. I begged him to believe that he was unjust to his gifts and inspirations, and suppressed the smile that I felt to be at hover about my lips. I've never, I said, heard better stories than those you have told me, or a more spirited relation. So much have your stories pleased me that I don't know how the time will pass while you are away. I'm longing to hear more stories. And what shall I be doing while you're away? It would be a great honour to me to hear a story from yourself, your honour, and all the week I'm away you can be turning it over in your mind. But you see, Alec, my stories are intended to be read; my stories are eye stories, yours are ear stories, and at an ear story you beat me easily. I'm far from thinking that, your honour, but whichever of us may come out first, I'd like to hear you tell a story.

Alec's blue, almost forget-me-not, eyes were fixed upon me and, cowed by them, I promised him a story. But you mustn't expect too much from me, I called down the road, for already I had begun to feel that I should be worsted in the contest. He lifted his hat and went away, laughing, I thought, as if he were sure I could match his stories. But as I turned in the wicket it seemed to me that Alec had gone away laughing at the thought of my being able to match his grandfather's stories. Not an easy task, I said, especially the Marban story. An hour remains between now and dinner, I continued, and bethought myself of the high wood as a likely place to find a subject; and turning to Jim, I said: How often have you believed in the rabbit and been disappointed? It may be, however, your luck will be to get the rabbit, and

mine to return with nothing in the shape of a story. You can come with me; we'll go hunting together; and Jim, lean and eager and hopeful, rushed ahead, leaving me to follow after, doubtful and already a little despondent, saying to myself: To match his stories I shall need a very striking subject.

A story of modern life wouldn't impress Alec. He'd be more interested in a wonder tale—a legend or fairy tale, a fairy tale being better than a legend. But is there any difference between fairy tales and legends? I asked, and wasted some time considering which came first in the history of man, fairy tale or legend, awaking from my reverie with the words: To whichever we give priority, a wonder tale it must be, and if I tell him an astonishing story he'll speak up for me in the ale-houses: no shanachie will be put in front of me, saving himself, of course. Something dramatic will impress him more than a story of every-day life, however good it may be. A murder story! and I bethought myself of a woman whom a verdict of not-proven saved from the gallows and imprisonment, leaving her free to pick and choose a husband from out of a crowd of suppliant suitors; and, as if determined to close all possible avenues of further romances, she chose the dowdiest. But it would seem that romance was her lot in life, for after twenty years of virtuous married life her husband became possessed of the belief that she was planning how she might rid herself of him, and the fact that her interest was to keep and not to rid herself of him did not help him. Day by day and night by night the most trivial accidents of life started his mind on the trail of some fresh suspicion, till at last he was driven to asking his wife to go away whither she pleased so long as she left the county. He gave her the choice of the child she would take with her (there were two), and it was not till the mother and child reached Chicago that her husband drew a happy

breath. A striking subject, I said to myself, but one more suited to Nature's handling than to mine, for it is, shall we say, sufficient in itself. An unliterary subject—the opposite to *Esther Waters*—and I remembered how a single sentence in a newspaper gave me the subject of *Esther Waters*. We're always complaining of the annoyance that servants occasion us, but do we ever think of the annoyance we occasion servants? were the words that set me thinking of a young lady in love with her footman. The subject was rejected as unworthy, and a moment after it seemed to me that somebody anxious to learn a trade was the character that enticed me. A kitchen-maid, I said. A kitchen-maid's adventure is an illegitimate child. On fourteen pounds a year she cannot and on sixteen pounds she can rear the child. The life of a human being at two pounds is my subject, and before I reached the Law Courts, distant about two hundred yards, the story of Esther Waters was decided upon. The story of *The Brook Kerith* discovered itself as quickly one evening in the National Library. John Eglington spoke to me of something he had been reading in which the theory that Jesus had not died but merely swooned on the cross was put forward, and the dream began instantly that if he did not die on the cross nothing was more likely than that he returned to the Essenes and met, years after, Paul, peradventure, in the cavern above the brook.

Accident furnished me with subjects for both books, but no literary accident may befall me in this lonely wood. My thoughts are wilful; I cannot fix them: the trees are beautiful and lean over the stream with noble gesture. The water tumbles from boulder to boulder merrily; without, however, mooting a story, I said. Blackbirds and thrushes are singing, but of what do they sing, of themselves or of nothing? My thoughts fled out of the high wood, crossed the seas, and in a second I was

in Médan seeking a story in an account of a flood that we had just been reading in a newspaper. A whole family was drowned in it, all except an old man of eighty. Zola, impressed by Nature's indifference, wrote the story, and I wrote it too, but who wrote the better story could not be decided, Zola not knowing English (mine was in English) and I not caring to read his lest I should find it superior to mine. But I'm now composing a story in competition with Alec Trusselby, and shall not find one if my thoughts will not come to heel.

All night I lay awake; and all the next day I spent in the high wood, seeking a subject, my thoughts distracted constantly in the wood by the beauty of the trees, by the birds in the stream and in the branches; and when I emerged from the wood, the hills set me thinking that if they would break their lofty silence they could tell me the tale of a beleaguered castle, with a fair-haired woman ascending the stairs, built between the walls. It is well to be fair-haired but it is not enough. Something must happen to her; she must be carried away by a rival chieftain; the battle must be waged from island to island. An Irish Helen, I said, and began to curse myself for wasting time upon tawdry Walter Scott nonsense, as poetical as a story about a burning mill and no jot more so, one in which the author has not forgotten to include a strong love interest. But sneers at Fleet Street are no help, and at the end of a short walk the story of a burning mill was dismissed as unworthy. The story I need, I continued, is a story not less perfect than those Alec told me, nor less complete, and dropped into a new consideration of the old woman who wouldn't give her money to the priest to rebuild the walls of his church, her need being a stained-glass window. The word 'need' reminded me of my own great need of a short story while writing *The Brook Kerith*—of a short tale complete in itself, relating the adventures of Jesus while in search

of a ram of a particular breed. The same fear was upon me then as now; but the needed tale was vouchsafed to me the same afternoon in the train on my way to Epping. But will the needed tale be vouchsafed to me again? I asked, and watched my thoughts scouting at adventure, one of them at last espying an old monk who had just finished telling the story of Lilith on the balcony overlooking the Brook Kerith. A Talmudic tale, I said, a lilt, such as a reaper might sing while reaping—a folk-tale told over the fireside, hardly as much. She is mentioned in *Faust*. Faust asks Mephistopheles: Who is that yonder? and he answers: Lilith, Adam's first wife. Beware of her, for she excels all women in the magic of her locks. If a young man should get entangled in them she will never set him free again. Michelangelo seems to have painted Lilith as an eternal temptation; Rossetti translated Michelangelo's design into verse, but neither seems to have perceived the story that the old chronicler's lilt stands for. As likely as not the old chronicler didn't guess that a great story lay behind his brief record. The meaning of the story was perchance forgotten when he wrote, and his summary is but a cocoon left over to be unwound by me. And the more I considered the cocoon the more full of thread it seemed to me to be. And all the next day and all the day after were spent in the high wood by the babbling water, unwinding, forgetful of Alec, absorbed in the story, happy in the conviction that were I to search the world over I should never find a woodland more like the Garden of Eden than this one.

These trees, I said, sheltered our first parents: if not these trees their progenitors, and who knows that Lilith and Adam may not have drunken from this stream? If not from this one, from one like it. I am walking in Eden without a doubt of it; the only difference between this wood and the woods of Eden is that there must have been fruit-trees in Eden and there is none here, not even

a nut bush, some hips and haws only. But it's easy to imagine a few fruit-trees; besides, this is but a corner of the domain that God gave to Adam and into which Lilith came from the underworld. The story is coming, I said, the story is coming, and at the end of the week I went to relate it to Alec in the woods of Ilanaidi. A pretty adventure, I said, on my way thither, and I stopped to consider the style in which I was to tell it; and while looking round admiring the far-away air of the plaintive little country, it seemed to me that every language, except its own, the beautiful Anglo-Irish idiom, odorous as the newly upturned clod of earth, would be inappropriate, and knowing myself to be as imitative as a monkey, I asked myself if I should be able to pipe my tune in it: with some outbreaks into Fleet Street, of course, I said. But he'll be listening to the story and will not hear the outbreaks, and if he does hear them they will seem to him the very thing he should admire, alas! And in regretful mood I continued walking, but very slowly, for there was a thought at the back of my mind that hesitated to come into words. At last I asked myself if it were wise to translate a Hebrew story into peasant idiom. As well might I translate Congreve's *Comedies* into the same, I added, a little further on; derisively, of course: and the passer-by must have descried an expression of perplexity upon my face, for I had begun to think that if I told my story in Anglo-Irish all the characteristics by which Alec knew me would disappear, and, worst of all, he might think I was putting a joke on him. But related in London idiom my story will be like music played on a worn-out piano. Good heavens! I said, I shall make no sort of a match in this competition, and might have run home if Alec hadn't at that moment risen to his feet, and he by the great stone, sacred in my memory to Liadin and Curithir.

CHAP. XXXIII.

IT seemed at first as if he had forgotten my promise to relate a story: I had hoped that we might go fern-gathering instead. Have you brought the story with you, your honour? Yes, I answered; I've a story to tell, and of Adam's first wife. But Adam's first wife was Eve, he rapped out, more energetically than I had expected; and to quiet him I said: Many stories about the famous garden have been told, and the one I am going to tell is from the Talmud. The name at once quelled any rebellious spirit that may have been in him, and he allowed me to inform him that there are two sacred books of the Hebrew Law, one known as the Bible, an inspired work, and another work, which is the Talmud, uninspired and four times as large as the Bible. And from the Talmud, Alec, we learn that Adam had a first wife, and there is a broken story which I have pieced together, the right of every shanachie, as you know well. Who should know better than yourself how stories are spun and woven, you the great shanachie of Connaught? The stories you tell me, Alec, you learnt from your grandfather: he read them in books, but added to them; you developed them just as the Hungarian gipsy develops on his fiddle the snatches of song that he hears the reapers singing in the corn-fields. I think I understand, sir, Alec said, and without leaving him time for reflection out of which might spring thoughts of his parish priest, who had never heard of Lilith, I began:

A great temptress she was, greater than our neighbour's wife, greater than the scarlet woman, and the daughters of Baal of whom you have no doubt heard in church. Sorra one of any of them names have I heard of, your honour. But all the same I'd like to hear the story of Adam's first wife, no matter the book she comes out of. A great trouble, I said gloomily, she always was to

Adam, leaving him often without ever saying when she was going to return, going away like a bird, still better as a wreath of mist which melts in the morning sun, and returns when the sun sinks behind the mountains. And once she was gone there was silence, nobody to bid him the hour of the day or to say: Here's a fine fig here, or would you like a rosy peach better? Nor anyone to say: I'm as dry as a lime-kiln, and could drink a jug of water at a draught, if you'd go to the river for me. His life lay like a lump of lead upon him, and his legs got too shaky to bear his body; he would come tottering down the path, his knees knocking together, not knowing how to bear with his grief, for Lilith had gone once more from him, and as was usual with her, without saying whither she was going or when she was coming back. She has gone, he said to himself, and henceforth the memory of her will be burning in me always; and he walked back and forth, unable to comprehend how he could go on living day after day in this garden, which already had begun to lose its beauty in his eyes, never seeing or hearing of her again.

He could no longer wander through the garden taking pleasure in the graceful trees, the shady dells and sunny glades, for every spot was part of her. The flowering bank beneath the fig-tree reminded him of many sweet midnight visitations, and he thought that the moss still retained the impress of her head. A great big sigh escaped him, and he turned away from the beautifullest parts of the river, for since her departure the river was running very shallow indeed between long gravel reaches, and he wearied of the pair of ousels that flitted from boulder to boulder: They are faithful to each other, why did she abandon me? he said, and fell to thinking, asking himself if Lilith came to him from Lucifer's domain by Iahveh's order or if she were sent by Lucifer to tempt him from his allegiance. None can answer these questions but Iahveh himself, he said, and he turned

into the twisting path that led up the hill-side to the praying stone that he had raised there. Iahveh, Alec, was the first Hebrew God, and I don't think I'm going too far if I say a sort of tribal God.

Adam threw himself on the ground, and bowed himself three times: My God, hearken to me, for I come to thee in great distress of mind and body, not having seen the golden-haired Lilith for many days, and without her the garden in which thou hast placed me has become a wilderness in my eyes; bid her return to me, else I perish. My God, my God, hear thy servant Adam, for he calls to thee to save him from his wretched plight. My God, my God, hearken to thy servant, again Adam cried out, but he had to cry many times before he could rouse Iahveh, who was dreaming in his golden chair of the last stubborn fight before the archangels were able to shut Lucifer up in hell. At length Adam's prayers awakened him, and a muttering began in his great beard. Adam calls me, Iahveh said, and having gained his ear, Adam rose to his feet and spoke outright, telling Iahveh that Lilith had left him without saying she would return, as she had done many times; but now I know, Lord, that she will never return to me again, unless thou commandest her to do so. Left thee for ever? Iahveh replied, and there was some tone of astonishment in his voice that perplexed Adam. Lilith! Iahveh repeated, as if he had forgotten her, and when he inquired of Adam, Lilith's reason for leaving, Adam related the story: that Lilith left him because he prayed morning and evening at the praying stone and inquired all things of God. Thereat God was moved in the imagination of his thoughts towards his servant Adam, and raised up by God's praise Adam continued his doleful recitations, saying that Lilith never avouched whether her visits were within God's knowledge or outside of it, in a measure embittering the pleasure that I took from her; for, Lord, I would obey thee in all things, and have

now come to ask if Lilith, by thy good will, may return to me. But if it be not thy will I will try to bear my life of loneliness in resignation, repenting all my days of the great sin I was guilty of towards thee in heaven long ago. Lilith, Iahveh answered, for now he remembered her, was one of the angels like thyself, Adam, who neither took sides for nor against me. All these have been condemned to wander on a gloomy border-land. All but thou. I have placed thee in a beautiful garden, thy transgression being lighter than theirs. Iahveh is a just God. But, Lord, is it by thy will that Lilith comes forth from gloomy glens and sterile clefts to visit me in the garden? Neither for nor against my will, but Iahveh is well pleased with his servant Adam for not having listened to the coaxing voice of the temptress who would have beguiled him from his lord God. My lord, if I have earned thy praise, reward thy servant with Lilith, and be sure that although I shall take pleasure in her golden hair I shall not cease to offer prayers to thee morning and evening by the praying stone that I have raised to thy honour. Offering will I bring—— My servant, Adam, I am well pleased with thee, Iahveh answered. Return to the shadowy peacefulness of thy garden and leave me to consider how Lilith may best be persuaded to return to thee.

The silence of the sunny mount was not broken again. Adam prayed, inly thanking God for his great mercies, a great sigh, however, escaping from him as he lay upon the ground, lifting his head from it from time to time, bowing and rejoicing to himself that his humility should have won from God a promise to use his power to persuade Lilith to return to Eden, for Iahveh couldn't compel Lilith, she having passed beyond his power into that of Lucifer. But Adam did not doubt that Iahveh would be able to persuade her. It may be that if she refuses he will thrust her out of the border-land into hell; and he

found great pleasure in his thoughts, for at the back of his mind was the certainty that very soon Lilith would be given back to him, whether in the middle of the night or when he dozed on the sunny bank he did not know, and it mattered little when, so long as she was returned to him.

As he descended the twisting path to the dell he remembered a corner by the river's brink in which he could dream of Lilith more intently than elsewhere, under the spotted branches of some plane-trees that were, however, still full of leaves. The river swirled by almost silent, and the willow weed wilted, its life having been lived; only a few faded and torn blooms still clinging to the stalks. But Adam had seen the flowers return: The word return had a significant beauty for him: Lilith was about to return, he said, and he watched the water ousels fly up and down the stream, alighting on the boulders with the same eagerness as when he had watched them while waiting for Lilith to appear to him. The sky, too, entranced him, for when he raised his head he could see between the mottled branches white clouds unfolding. A squirrel cracked a nut in the branches above him, the shells fell at his feet and he said: The season of the nuts has come; Lilith and I will share them together, and he remembered the different parts of the garden where the different nuts grew large and rich. Nuts and fruit we shall have in plenty this year, he continued, and suddenly his thoughts broke away and he began to ask himself what Iahveh's designs might be. He will send forth angels to seek her if she be on earth, but if she have returned to Lucifer God cannot enter the portals of the world below and say that she must be given up. We shall have to wait, and ages will pass by. His heart failed him a little, but revived soon after, for it seemed to him that he could hear the sound of wings in the air. He is sending his

angels. Doubtless Michael, Gabriel and Raphael have been chosen for they are the swiftest of God's messengers.

CHAP. XXXIV.

THE sound I hear is not the sound of wild geese speeding northward, he said, and his ears had not deceived him: the wings he heard were those of Michael, Gabriel and Raphael come from the battlements of heaven, flying over continents and seas, and always in circles, lest any corner of the earth wherein Lilith might be hidden should escape their eyes. But there may be days, and weeks, and months, Adam said, before they find her. It was as he had said, days and weeks and months passed before the angels flying over the earth cried to one another: Night is coming on, the clouds are thickening; soon there will be no more light; it might be well for us to descend. A fair island lies in the sea below us, Michael said; one that we have often overlooked. And Gabriel answered Michael: As likely as elsewhere she may be yonder. Raphael and myself will be glad to rest our wings; and balancing themselves like the gulls, they descended, and alighting on a long reach of white strand, they sat thereon resting, and watching the warm breeze coming and going, shaking the juniper bushes with which the tussocked grass was sprinkled, shaking them and leaving them still again.

The earth is not without its beauty, the angels were thinking, as they sat listening to the waves creaming up into the bay over the ribbed strand, retiring and advancing, and creeping up to the angels, obliging them to retire to some rocks whither the tide did not come. A beautiful evening, Michael said, for beyond the bay, seaward, there was a bar of gold and a flush of crimson. There are pleasant things to be seen in this world, Michael continued, and this island seems a spot that our witch might

choose to hide herself in. It seems to be filled with woods, and we may find her in some clough or dell tressing her hair, a favourite pastime of hers, so it is said. And then they began to talk about the neutral angels and the miserable lot assigned to them to wander always in the border-land between earth and hell. All are there except Adam, and Lilith is sometimes in the deepest circles of hell with Lucifer himself, whose aider and abetter she is, and sometimes wandering over the earth scheming how she may embarrass the lord. Whereas Adam is a poor, weak creature, said Gabriel. The only one, Michael responded, whose sin was so slight that to our lord Iahveh the border-lands seemed too great a punishment for him. So our lord and master placed him in a garden, Michael continued, and methinks that Lilith's visits thither were decreed not by him but by Lucifer, whom we threw into hell after many great battles: you will remember how my spear struck him between the eyes as he led his legions against us up the battlements. Methought it was my sword that cleft him, said Gabriel to himself, and leaving Michael to the imagination of his thoughts, he and Raphael watched the moth-like moon, till at last the waves rushing over the white strand wetted the shingled bank on which the angels were seated. We had better be looking out for some cave inland where we can pass the night, Gabriel said; and Raphael answered he was cold though he had drawn his wings closer round him. A great bird went by: He, too, seems cold, Raphael cried, and is seeking a warm roost; let us go up into the island and find a quiet corner in the woods. Raphael's counsel was approved by Michael and Gabriel, and Iahveh's three messengers retired from the shore, and picking their way through the juniper bushes they penetrated through the brambles into the clough, and lifting a curtain of trailing plants, Gabriel said: Behold! the cave we are looking for. And stooping their

heads the angels passed under a woof of flowers and tendrils into a great hall, in which lay a pool and in it the moth-like moon they had seen without; at which the angels were astonished; but on looking up through a fissure in the rocks and seeing the moon still in the sky they were at one that there was a beauty on earth that seemed lacking in heaven; whereupon Michael said: We have been in the atmosphere of the earth now for forty days, flying in search of Lilith, and have lost some of our angelic nature; let us hope that we may find her and return to heaven lest we become contaminated. Gabriel and Raphael did not share Michael's fears and were glad of the white sand with which the floor of the cave was covered: We shall awaken to-morrow as celestial as the day when we left the ramparts of heaven. Iahveh would not have sent us on this errand if we were to be contaminated, Gabriel said. We are immortal, Raphael answered, and he asked Michael if that weren't so, but Michael answered nothing, he being asleep. But it was not many minutes before he began to moan and toss himself in his sleep, setting Gabriel and Raphael wondering: What has befallen our brother? for he murmurs now in his sleep so loudly that we cannot hear the doves in the clefts of the rocks, Gabriel whispered. He murmurs, Raphael said, somewhat like the doves; and Gabriel replied: But now his cooing has changed into cries: the doves go away out of the clefts with a clang of wings; what can have befallen our brother? The island is enchanted, Raphael whispered; let us away. But, Gabriel answered, we cannot leave our brother in the power of the enchantress.

At that moment a great cry broke from Michael and he rolled into the moonbeam and lay in it gazing at the moon, recovering himself at last sufficiently to overlook his brethren who were pretending sleep. And they seeming to him to be in deep sleep he ventured to his feet

and passed under the curtain of trailing plants out of the cave. Is our brother playing us false? Gabriel whispered to Raphael. Has she bidden him to her in a dream? Raphael asked; and the twain rose, and going to the mouth of the cave they stood like stocks and watched their brother in amazement, and he walking down to the sea and bathing therein like one who wished to purify himself after sin. Michael must not know that we have observed him, Gabriel said. The spell of the enchantress has certainly fallen upon him, Raphael muttered; let us to our beds, and, convinced that his brethren slept, Michael laid himself down. But they had not slept long before Gabriel began to sigh in his sleep, and very soon his sighs became moans; he tossed himself, lifting himself bridge-wise, falling back again, at last rolling over on his side. She has visited brother Gabriel in his dream, Raphael whispered to Michael, and Michael said: Hush! Let us pretend to be asleep, and just as Gabriel and Raphael had seen Michael go down to the sea to bathe himself, they saw Gabriel do the same, and were astonished thereby.

Now when Gabriel returned to the cave he spied upon his brethren to make sure they were sleeping and had learned nothing of what had befallen him, and they feigning sleep so well that he believed them to be asleep, he laid himself down. But sleep had not long obtained hold of him when Raphael was overtaken by a dream of the enchantress; his sighs and moans were the same as his brothers' had been; and when at last his desire was eased in one sharp pang, he did as they had done; he went to the sea for purification, and believing his brethren to be really asleep when he returned to the cave, he chuckled, saying to himself: In the morning I will question them, and they will give evasive answers, but I know that Michael dreamed of her; Michael knows that Gabriel dreamed of her, but none knows that I too was taken in

her net of pleasure and of pain; and while thinking how he might discern between the twain he fell asleep listening to a nightingale singing in the vine in the fissure of the rocks. Other nightingales began soon after, awakening the tired angels. We have no such music in heaven, Gabriel said; and Michael answered: We might take one of these birds to teach our choristers. And Raphael muttered: We must not let our thoughts dwell on the pleasures of the earth, for our habitation is with God among the peaks; let us not forget that we are the angels of the lord.

To Gabriel and Michael these admonitions seemed uncalled for, but their heads were so full of sleep that they failed to find a biting answer, and they slept despite the chorusing of the birds and it was broad daylight when they awoke. We have overslept ourselves, said Michael, and lifting the curtain of creeping plants, he added: A lovely morning awaits us. On these words Gabriel and Raphael arose, and blinking still, they stumbled into what seemed to them the most beautiful day that had unclosed before their eyes since Iahveh sent them on their errand. And thanking God for having sent them on it, they walked about the island admiring the woods, the dells within the woods, the reaches of white sand leading to the sea and the rocks rising above the sea. We have not alighted as often as we should have done; we have wearied ourselves flying from dawn to sunset, Raphael murmured to himself, with the intention that his companions should hear him, which they did, and Michael, remembering how he had admonished them overnight, lest their thoughts should linger on the many beauties they beheld in the world, answered him: Yesternight my words were that we should not think overmuch of what we saw and heard in this world, but remember always that we are archangels. The beauty of the morning refreshes the eyes, and the air is sweet in the lungs,

Raphael answered, and the angels stopped on the outskirts of the woods, so that they might watch the love dance of the butterflies. Shall we cross the flowering plain, Gabriel asked, and Michael answered: Yes, for in that ring of trees she may be sitting; and Raphael, the slyest of the three, asked his brother why, having searched the earth all over in vain for Lilith, he should think to find her in that ring of trees. Enchantment was abroad last night, Michael answered; didst find it so, Raphael? And Raphael answered: I heard sighing and moaning as of doves; and they were speaking of the songs of the nightingales when they entered the ring of trees in the middle of the plain, in the centre of which was a well, and by it, as Michael anticipated, Lilith sat combing her locks. So you've found me at last, she said to the angels, and Michael answered: Thou talkest as one that expecteth visitors. And she replied: Expecteth you, yes, and a long time past, for many is the time I've caught sight of your wings in this well, and expected your alighting in the flowering meadow, but you went away north and south, leaving me waiting for you here. I have watched your pursuit of me, for in this well all things are mirrored; and from this spot I need not turn to know everything that befalls the world.

And last night—— said Michael. Last night, Lilith interrupted, I saw you sweep down and alight on to the firm sand after long flying. You went up the beach together in search of a cave, and I was with you during the night in dreams, she continued, causing the angels to hang down their heads ashamed. But Lilith being among the fallen angels was in no wise ashamed, and extorted from Michael a confession that he had followed a white phantom in his dreams, and overtaking her among the woods, she had whispered to him: Seek some soft bank of flowers. They had wandered in search of this bank and were always on the point of discovering it, but

the flowers vanished. At last a pang of pleasure or pain, he knew not which, divided them. I saw thee no more, he said. And now, Gabriel, emulate the truthfulness of thy brother's words, and tell me in what form I came to thee, in what form thou sawest me. Thou camest upon me, Gabriel said, as I was on my way to obey a summons to attend upon our lord the mighty Iahveh; thou camest upon me, and I begged thee to allow me to answer his summons, promising to return to thee. But thou wouldst not hide thy bosom with thy hair, and we sought to hide ourselves behind a cloud; but Michael and Raphael, who were jealous of me, dissolved the cloud into rain. And now, Raphael, Lilith said, tell thy dream of me, for I was with thee too. And Raphael, who was filled with subterfuge, stood by more embarrassed than his brethren, and tried to elude the witch's examination, but Lilith pursued him with questions, and the companions turned upon him and said: We were awakened by sighs and moans; we feigned sleep, but through our half-opened eyelids we saw thee leave the cave and go down and bathe thyself in the sea. Whereupon Raphael, seeing that further concealment was unavailing, answered that all he had seen or felt of the temptation that had visited him in the night were two red lips, winged lips, he said, that hovered over me and sank upon my lips, sending a sting between at which all my flesh shuddered: for a moment it seemed to me that I was lifted into an ecstasy more intense than heaven: I seemed to dissolve. At last thou hast found the truth, Raphael, Lilith said, and it was thus in many shapes that I visited Adam on the flowering bank in Eden, between sleeping and waking, and in deep dreams.

We have come, said Michael, interrupting Lilith suddenly, to ask thee if thou wilt return to Adam; we have come from the lord Iahveh, shall we say thy God? Say it not, said Lilith. You have come from Iahveh to ask

me to return to Adam, and my answer is that my lord is Lucifer and he would not have me obedient to any other God. Not to exact obedience, said Raphael, have we come; not to exact obedience, Gabriel insisted. And standing on either side of Lilith, who continued combing her golden locks, regaling herself with her beauty reflected in the still waters of the well, the angels besought her to return to Adam; and she answered: I cannot abjure Lucifer, he has power over me as the lord hath power over you. It is by his will that I visited Adam and it is by his will that I left Adam. A last word we would have with thee, Michael said. Knowest thou, Lilith, that if thou wilt not return to Adam, Iahveh will create out of earth a fairer woman for Adam's enjoyment and companionship in the garden? A fairer woman than I am, Lilith answered, raising her head from the well, and it is you who were with me last night that say it? I doubt the power of the lord in heaven to do what you say. And the angels who were smitten with doubt whether she had not spoken the truth feared to look upon her longer lest their doubts should be strengthened regarding the power of the God they served. We will return, said they, to the lord with thine insolent answer, and she saw the angels spread their wings and depart up into the morning sky, passing over the clouds into the blue spaces beyond to reach the ramparts of heaven before many hours have passed, she said to herself.

CHAP. XXXV.

IAHVEH is impatient and restless, Lilith said, for she could see him in her well looking over the battlements awaiting his archangels; and she could see too the scouting cohorts of seraphim and cherubim that he had sent forth, seeking the wings of their brethren on every horizon. At last one of the winged messengers stood before

the lord. Michael and Gabriel and Raphael have been seen by our distant brethren, he said, and they have passed the word on to us. I have arrived with the news for the lord, glad to be the first to bring it. At these words the angels broke into song, and spreading out their wings they formed circle-wise around the lord, who, after thanking them, dismissed them abruptly, his mind being perturbed and beset with thoughts of the news that his archangels were bringing to him. All things being reflected in his wisdom he was distraught thereby, and Michael, Gabriel and Raphael dared not advance from the battlement on which they had alighted. Our loved Iahveh, said Michael, after many wanderings we return to thee. Is Lilith returning to Adam? the lord asked. We were flying one night above an island—— Michael began. Her words were, Lord, Gabriel interjected, that she was one of Lucifer's vassals and obedient only unto him. Whereat a cloud gathered on the lord's face, and Michael and Raphael regretted Gabriel's admission that Lilith had vowed herself unto Satan, for Iahveh's face was like the whirlwind, terrible, and the mountains shook with his voice. She will not return to Adam, the lord repeated, and the subaltern angels hid themselves in the clefts. A companion must be given to Adam, for I have promised him one. Tell me of your discovery of Lilith; and begin thy narrative, he said, raising his eyes to Michael. Michael began. But God was listless and gave a poor ear to the story of the great flying excursion, wonderful though it was; and Gabriel, seeing that Michael was speaking dryly, began to grow impatient, and might have related the curious dreams that befell them in the cave if the lord had not dismissed his archangels suddenly, saying: Leave me to meditate. And for many days the lord sat in his golden chair, his brow darkened by the shadows of coming difficulties, his thoughts revolving in

memories of his wars against the highest and best-loved of the archangels.

Lucifer had plotted against him, and the cohorts had been at battle pursuing the foe or being pursued by the foe, æon after æon. Heaven was without music of harp and lyre, only the clash of swords and shields was heard echoing from spears, æon to æon, while the war was pursued from star to star across the sky and down the sky, angels falling into the pit and rising out of the pit to renew the fight. But at last the lord's angels discovered a way to victory: the evil angels were enclosed within the gates of hell, and when the gates clashed upon them, the lord said: We are at peace again; the weariness of battle is over, and a happy peace broods once more in heaven. But my perplexities are not over yet. I have created an earth so that I may have a garden in which to place Adam, whom I wish to separate from the other neutrals. Let my will be done, said the lord, and instantly Adam found himself in a garden with Lilith for his ghostly visitor, till Lucifer, who still plotted against the lord, bade her away from Adam, for in his evil heart he hoped through Adam to bring Iahveh's kingdom to naught. He must have a companion, said the lord, for after his great victory over Lucifer the lord's heart was softened, and he was moved to abide in peace in his heaven among the angels, listening to their glorifications, to their praise, to their songs, to the music of harp and of timbrel year after year, century after century, æon after æon. But over Iahveh himself is a law, and by virtue of that law I am compelled to create, to equalise all things, to pair all. Again the lord was troubled, and he asked himself in vain why this was so, for was he not, since Lucifer's overthrow, almighty? Almighty, yes; but he must create though his creations might lead to his own destruction in some distant time. A fate there is behind the gods surely, he muttered once again and, compelled by his fate, he de-

scended one night into the garden of Eden and reached out his hand to take a rib out of the side of Adam, and with that rib he made a creature like unto Adam, and when Adam woke in the morning he found God's last work, Eve, sleeping by his side. God was pleased with his work, and Adam wondered at it, Eve's small shoulders surprising him, and her bosom even more so; he could not understand why she should bulge under her throat; and he said: She is so heavy about the hips that she'll never be much good at the climbing of trees after fruit; I shall have to climb and shake the branches for her. The other differences in her shape seemed to him still more strange; she seemed to him incomplete, and wondering at her incompleteness he walked towards the river, thinking that belike she needed washing and would smell the sweeter after. But he stopped and being full of thought he remembered that to rouse her would be unkind, so peaceful was her sleep and so healthful did it seem. So he turned towards the river again, but his absence had awakened Eve, who, sitting up on her buttocks, watched him, and the instinct of pursuit arising in her in an instant, she followed him, stumbling over the ground in her great hurry.

Over the brink he went head foremost into a deep pool, and she, knowing nothing of water and its dangers, tumbled in after him, making a great plop, fortunately causing him to look round, and, seeing what had happened, Adam dived. He didn't recover her, and dived again, and this time he managed to get hold of her by the hair, and by it he towed her to the bank and laid her out, wondering why she lay so still. It might be well to let some of the water run out of her, he said to himself, so he turned her over, and when she had vomited forth her eyes opened, and it was not long before she was sitting up and asking Adam to tell what had befallen her. Thou art Eve, he answered, the companion that Iahveh promised

me. We are in Eden; and the river is for swimmers, and until thou hast learnt to swim thou must not venture into the deep pools. But I will teach the art to thee; and it pleased Eve to hear that she was going to learn from Adam. But shall I go under the water? she asked. Adam answered that he would support her. She liked to hear that his hand would be under her chin. But her thoughts turning from to-morrow suddenly, she said: But thou hast not told me how I came hither. Adam looked forward to telling her the whole story, for since he had washed her as she lay unconscious on the bank, and disentangled her hair, she had begun to seem different in his eyes, and they went through the garden together, Adam showing the fruit-trees that abounded, giving her fruit to eat, and Eve gathering flowers wherewith to weave a wreath for her hair.

Iahveh gave thee to me for I was lonely in this garden, he said, and her eyes brightened, and she said: Who is Iahveh? Hush, said Adam, the sacred name must be spoken more reverently; he put his fingers to his lips, and the alarmed twain stood gazing at the pillared fir-trees that grew round the stone altar, their skins drying quickly in the warm air. A touch of autumn was in it, but the sun was glowing, and when the lonely cloud that had hidden the sun for a minute passed on, the garden by the spell of contrast seemed more beautiful than before. Come thou with me to his altar, Eve: I would thank him for his gift to me of thee, and they went up the path, and as soon as he had thrown himself on the ground and bowed himself three times, and muttered in his beard, he arose and, taking Eve's hand in his, he said: By Iahveh's altar I will tell the story of Iahveh's wars against Lucifer. Eve listened because Adam's voice pleased her, but she would rather have heard his voice on a subject nearer to them than the clashing of shields of long ago, the whirling of swords and the thrusting of

spears in the abyss; and despite her desire to please Adam her thoughts were often away from the conflicts that had taken place in the middle air over against the ramparts of heaven and about the gates of the pit.

Adam was at this time a young man of comely presence, tall and lithe, and Eve would not have had his shoulders different from what they were. They flanged out from the neck nobly, and she liked his long, thin, sinewy arms, and the big hands that she could see were stronger than hers. His chest is flat and the hips narrow; his legs are long and sinewy, not round, like mine, she said. I like his shape, she murmured, and hoped that he liked hers. Now of what are you thinking? he said. I was thinking, she answered, that if thou hadst headed the army of Lucifer thou wouldst have conquered Iahveh. Adam's face filled with shadow, so lightly did she speak the name, and he said: Thou must not think such wicked thoughts, and leaving the altar he paced before her. His steps pleased her, so strong and rhythmical were they, and she enjoyed his back, so strong did it seem. Thou art the most beautiful thing in this garden, she said, and my eyes will never weary of overlooking thee. Now what is this hairy thing I see, and what use is it? she said. And Adam did not answer her. He was thinking the while of the great battles of long ago, the clashing of the shields and the dense array of spears, but at last her hands awoke him from his reverie. Don't pull it so, he said, and she loosed his beard. Why have I not one? she asked; my poor face is bare. But it is more beautiful bare than hairy. I have often wished to be without my beard. But I would not wish thee without it, she answered, and each was a gazing stock to the other. Adam's muscles were Eve's admiration, and the sweet roundnesses of Eve's limbs, Adam's. Why these breasts? he said. Dost not like them? she asked. Yes; they are beautiful. How flat and shapeless am I. Say not so,

thou art very beautiful, Adam. How much stronger, how much fleeter, and she continued to find pleasure in Adam as they walked along and across the garden under the fruit-trees, eating of the purple figs and the pink peaches, Adam showing how the fruit must be skinned before it can be eaten and Eve doing as she was bidden. Though her appetite had not yet begun to awaken she ate the fruit, for she could not do anything except that which she thought would please Adam. But thou'lt not listen to the valour of the angels, said Adam. I will listen, she replied, when I grow weary of looking upon thee. But wilt thou grow weary of me? Adam asked. And they fell to pondering on the chance words that had been uttered. At last Eve asked: Whither leads that path? It leads, he answered, to the fig-trees, under whose shelter I sleep at night. Let us go thither, for I would share thy bed, she said. Thou shalt share it, Eve, but before we lie down together thou must learn to pray to Iahveh. Eve had little heart for learning prayers, and his face telling his disapprobation, she said: Thou art not satisfied with me. And on these words they fell asleep on the flowering bank. And they slept till morning arose on the garden, as children do.

CHAP. XXXVI.

IT was the sparrows twittering in the vine that awoke Adam, and laying his hand on Eve's shoulder, who was still asleep, he said: The day is beginning; come, let us offer thanks to Iahveh for the joyful night, and Eve, rousing herself from her sleep, said: Thy will be done, and she followed Adam up the hill-side, and imitated him in all things, throwing herself on the ground and bowing herself three times; and when this ritual was accomplished she gave ear to Adam's prolonged mutterings, and strove to understand them, but soon her brain wearied,

and she might have renounced the task of trying to follow his repentance for the sins he had committed in heaven if she had not suddenly heard the name of Lilith. Now who can Lilith be? One of the angels of whom Adam tells such long stories? she asked herself. Somebody he knew before the fall, she added, and resolved to await an occasion when she could inquire of him who Lilith was. Nor was it long before she heard him speak again of Lilith's visits to the garden. By whose orders did she come to the garden: Iahveh's or Lucifer's? she asked herself, and the question would have been put to Adam if he had not been muttering prayers, and if the thought had not come to Eve that it might be well for her to get a confession from Adam that the memories of the days he had spent in the garden with Lilith were still dear to him. Iahveh is but a blind, she said, as she set the peaches and figs she had gathered before Adam; and while he ate thereof she began to speak to him of their thanksgivings, and offerings of fruits, and to tell the hope she cherished that the day's work before them would be pleasing to Iahveh, making herself pleasing to Adam thereby and advancing herself still further in his favour when she returned to the stories he had told her yesterday as if she had been considering them ever since: the clashing of the shields when Iahveh's angels descended to give battle unto Lucifer; how Gabriel whirled his sword and an entire legion fell before it, and how a plump of spears fell back before Michael's spear. On these feats and on the recital of Raphael's ruses in outflanking the enemy, Adam relied to engage her mind, and remembering how languidly she had listened yesterday he was overjoyed at seeing that he had in the main misjudged her, and began to relate the story over again from the beginning, watching her carefully all the time; but her attention never relaxed, and she showed desire to be instructed, saying: Thou wast wise not to join with

Lucifer's angels, for Iahveh is all-powerful, and knowing him to be all-powerful, thou hadst the wisdom to refrain. I knew the power of Iahveh the almighty, Adam answered her. And Lucifer, she said, must have known that too. Yes, he too knew him to be an almighty God. Then why, she asked innocently, did Lucifer rebel against that which he knew to be almighty?

At this question a cloud came into Adam's face, and he began a tangled explanation to which Eve listened, knowing well that the thing she desired to hear would soon be made known to her. So she had patience with Adam, and listened to his prolix relation that although God was almighty he had, as it were, delegated the administration of evil to Lucifer, reserving to himself the administration of all good things. This was the first circle of thought into which Adam descended. He descended into still further circles, and with Eve's eyes upon him he couldn't doubt that she listened. But did she understand? he asked himself, and was satisfied that she did. And then, as if picking up her thoughts a little farther on, Eve said: Thou wast lonely in the garden before he gave me to thee? and Adam answered innocently: Not lonely, for there was Lilith. At which she opened her eyes as if she had not heard the name before, and asked: Who is Lilith? Who is Lilith? Adam answered; and he seemed to drop back into a past time and away from her.

The sound of her name carried him as a sudden breeze carries a barque from the shore out into the sea. He seemed to forget the woman by his side, and when he spoke it was not Eve that prompted him to speak but a sudden memory. Lilith, he said, was my wife before thou camest. We were angels in heaven before the fall. Adam's thoughts seemed to die away, and Eve had to awaken him with her voice. And she came to visit thee in the garden? She came to me, he answered, between waking and sleeping and in dreams. Didst never see her

in the noonday as thou seest me? Eve asked. And Adam knew not how to shape an answer that Eve would understand, for Lilith was clear to Adam only so long as he did not try to express her in words, or think about her too closely.

The mist at the edge of the stream vanishes in the morning when the sun's heat is strong, and the mist returns to the edge of the stream when the sun sinks behind the hills. She was evanescent, Alec, as the mist, yet she was very real, more real than Eve sitting by him; Adam could not put his thoughts into words and Eve would not have understood him if he had said: Lilith is the reality behind the appearance. By appearance I mean all that our senses reveal to us. An orange will serve for an example. We know an orange only through our senses—sight, hearing, touch and smell—but it may be held that there is something behind the appearance and that if we willingly forgo the appearance we reach reality, that which is behind the appearance. You find it difficult to follow this, Alec, but the hermit that you told me of, Scothine, who lived in the woods on water-cress and on the crags by the sea on gulls' eggs, may have gained the reality that is perhaps behind the appearance. Be this as it may, that was his aim: he was, in something more than the conventional sense of the words, a seeker of reality. We are always told, Alec answered, by the clergy that the world we live in is but a shape of the real world that is beyond heaven, is it that you would be telling me, sir? Well, not exactly that, Alec, but something like that. And now, to get on with the story. Eve listened to Adam, trying to puzzle out his idea of Lilith to her, all the while mad jealous she was of this ghostly playmate who used to come to him in dreams, bringing such anguish of delight with her. But she was, begob, too wise a woman to show her jealousy, and she continued to listen to Adam, who, she could see, gained great pleas-

ure from his narrative, he being one of those who retired into the past as some do into a church. At times we'd all like to get the world behind us. And in these moments we're all seekers of reality, Alec. I think that I'm beginning to comprehend, he answered. But women aren't like that, I'm thinking; for them life is all in the present.

CHAP. XXXVII.

IF thou wouldst learn swimming, come with me to the river, said Adam, and Eve followed Adam thither, doubtful, without enthusiasm, one might say in fear, for since yesterday her memory of the suffocating moments that she had passed under the water was more distinct. But Adam was firm with her; and supporting her with one hand, he bade her put her trust in him, and told her that in a little while she would cross the river as easily as the animal swimming in the current yonder. Ah, now he has gone under. Drowned, said Eve. No; he has come up yonder. He has caught a fish. Eve had not yet seen any fishes, and began to be interested in them, and in the animal that had caught the fish. Trust thyself to me, Adam said; and let thy legs and hands move together.

Eve was now tired, and begged to be allowed to return to the bank, but after resting, the swimming lesson was continued, and with so much success that hope was held out to her that she would be able to cross the river in a few days, a thing which she very much wished to do, for the brown animals they had seen diving in the current brought the fishes they caught in their jaws to a great flat rock, and Eve was curious to learn what became of the fishes they brought thither. She could see four little brown spots, but did not know that these were the otters' cubs; nor that otters lived upon fish. And every morning, to please Adam, she applied herself to the task of learn-

ing to swim in the pool, and, as he had foreseen, in a few days her arms and legs began to move together, and in a few days more she was on the other side of the river, wading very quietly towards the rock on which the cubs waited.

The otters had already distributed some fishes among the cubs, and these were eagerly disputed with a strange whistling noise, each holding a fish in his forepaws, and eating his way from the head down to the tail which he discarded. Adam and Eve could see the fishes did not like being eaten, for the fishes struggled, but the cubs held them tightly in their paws, and continued to gnaw them. I wonder what the fishes taste like, Eve said; but neither had eaten flesh, and they were loth to take a piece from the cubs, which they could have easily done, for one of the cubs had shown such signs of friendliness that he almost offered them a piece of fish, but they were loth to accept his gift, for they were suddenly possessed of a strange premonition, a sort of instinctive knowledge it was that the larger animals were responsible for the coming into the world of the smaller animals, and these smaller animals were being fed by them upon fish. But what becomes of the fishes? they asked themselves; for they that are now within the otters were swimming in the river, leaping in the sunlight a while ago, and feeling that neither could explain the mystery to the other, Adam and Eve retired to their own side of the river, perplexed and unhappy.

It was some days later, while they were bathing in the river, that they caught sight of the otters with their four cubs in the river, daddy and mummy teaching the younglings how to pursue the fishes under the water, and a great commotion they were making, the terrified fishes striving to escape from their enemies in all directions, some of them darting up an inlet in which there was so little water that Adam and Eve might have picked them

out with their hands. One of the cubs followed these, and presently he caught a fish, and Adam and Eve expected to see him return to the river and bring his spoil to the rock in front of the den and eat it there, but a second thought seemed to come through his mind, and instead of returning to the river he trotted up the bank and laid the fish at their feet.

He allowed them to stroke him; he jumped round them, and then, remembering that his business was to pursue fishes, he returned to the water, and they saw no more of him till next day. Will he bring us a fish again? Eve said, and they waited at the head of a creek. He had not forgotten them and, not content with giving them one fish, he returned to the water and began the hunt again. Adam and Eve thought they would see no more of him, and with the fish he had given them they returned to their dwelling under the plane-trees in the clough or dell, out of reach of the winds; and great was their surprise when they saw the otter following them with a fish in his mouth, and, as if to encourage them to eat the fish he had brought them, he laid it before them and began to eat another, one they had picked out of the shallows; and he ate with a relish which they accepted as wilful exaggeration, his purpose being to win them over to his mode of life. We shall do well to imitate the animals, Eve said, for they know more than we do, isn't that so? she asked, as she sliced a fish with a sharp stone and gave half of it to Adam. The animals must know more than we do; it could not be else, he said, they having lived upon the earth always, and as he said these words a shadow overran his face, and to disperse it she called to Othniel, the name they had given the otter, and he came trotting round her feet, and jumped upon her knees. Look at our little swimmer, she said, who didn't need any teaching. Is he not asking us to take him down to the river? We must, for his diet is fish, and we cannot catch

them for him. But he nas just eaten, Adam answered, for he was thinking that it might be better to wean Othniel from the river, if that were possible. But as his diet is fish we cannot keep him from the river, Eve replied, and all three went down to the river together, Othniel passing into the stream silently as oil, and showing himself a faster swimmer than his wild brethren, and a more expert fisher.

He remained so long under water that Eve clasped her hands, certain he was drowning; a moment after they caught sight of the beloved brown-whiskered face coming towards them, a silver fish in his jaws. But though he seems to prefer us to his brethren, the river will tempt him away from us, Adam said. Thou art thinking of Lilith, Eve answered, and Adam denied that this was so, saying that he was dreaming of weapons whereby he might take the fishes from the river, and, possessed by this idea, he began to sharpen flints. But the fishes were swift and sudden and eluded the spear till Othniel, as if he would save Adam from humiliation, began to drive them towards Adam. At last a frightened fish fell to Adam's spear, and over this fish Othniel started a great gambol; nor would he be gainsaid of his fun, and his pretty ways and intelligence took such a hold on their affections that they lived in a dread lest they should lose him, a not unreasonable dread for he was often unable to subdue his mood to remain in the river: he would raise himself half-way out of the water, acknowledging their calling by the gesture; and by a sudden dive he sought to tell them that they need not expect him yet awhile. They sought the little runaway up the river where the water rushed over the boulders; he allowed them to capture him after a long frolic in the warm autumn nights, and in turn they carried him to a comfortable bed of leaves in the cave. But if his mood was for deep waters he kept down the stream and they called and swam out to him in

vain; to swim after an otter is vainer than to call to him; and the alarmed twain stood watching the current swirling almost silently past the walls that Iahveh had built round the garden, widening as it flowed, looping round islands, disappearing into forests, seeming by times to lose itself in marshes and fens, but recovering itself always and threading its way into the grey autumn hills safely. But going whither? they asked themselves, forgetful of Othniel; but only for a moment: The river brought him to us, Eve said, and the river has taken him away. Iahveh is greater than the river, Adam answered, therefore we must pray that he may bid Othniel return to us. The words were on Eve's lips to reply: Iahveh cannot do that, but her feet turned into the path and they prayed at the stone altar on the hill-top that Othniel might be given back to them. Iahveh is in no mood to listen to us to-night, Adam said: We cannot awaken him. And Eve answered: Though he doesn't answer us, he may have heard us, and certain that he had heard their prayers and would answer them favourably they slept lightly, awakened often, first by sighings that seemed to come from Othniel's bed. Eve's ears were quicker than Adam's, but in answer to her Adam said: It isn't he, but the wind sighing in the trees. Again Eve awakened Adam, saying: Hearken, and Adam answered: It is not he but a pebble fallen from the roof. Again they were awakened: A bird or bat, Adam said, may have come, but it has gone again. Sleep on. Sleep may bring dreams of him, but the Othniel of their dreams was not the delightful Othniel of their remembrances, and they wandered distraught till one day they saw him coming towards them thinking more of his warm bed of leaves than of them. But he had come back, and they excused his heartlessness, Eve saying: He has been thrown about by the current and is well tired. This might well have been so for the river was in flood, and even an

otter cannot swim against a current flowing heavily against him. Let him lie and rest himself, and while he is resting, Eve continued, do thou be fishing for him in the river with the new spear, and if thou canst catch fish for him we may keep him in the cave always. And Eve waited while Adam fished, but he brought no fishes home with him, and Othniel, waking hungry in the evening, was taken to the river. Canst not see, Eve said, how turbulent is the water? the river is no longer the same river; the banks are overflowed and the edges thronged with birds—birds we have never seen before. These come up the river, Adam answered her, when the cold weather is near.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

THE rainy season began soon after, and the river rose steadily day after day, till Adam was of a mind that it would be safer to move up the hill-side to Iahveh's altar than to remain in the clough in which they might be easily drowned; even Othniel, Adam said, great a swimmer as he was, could not contend against the waters as they are now running. Again and again Adam thrust his spear into the pools, but the fishes had sought to escape the force of the flood by sinking to the bottom, and to get himself a dinner, Othniel ascended the river and remained away for days over the hill-side, fishing being easier higher up the stream; and when he returned he was so tired that it seemed as if he would not be able to sleep off his weariness. They were glad of this for the storms continued despite their prayers to Iahveh; it were better, they said, that Othniel should fast than that he should drown; and he was very hungry indeed when a south wind began to blow over the garden. He caught his dinner quickly, and they thought to persuade him to leave the river; but he lingered by the brink, loth to

leave it; for him every breeze seemed to be laden with tidings; and with beating hearts they watched him sniffing through the reeds. He is not seeking fishes, but his kin, Eve said, and a few days after, an otter that had doubtless scented him from afar, belike from the banks of the islands beyond the walls, met him in the current, and the twain went away together. The river brought him to us, Eve said; the river has taken him from us; under yonder bank they will beget young. As these words were spoken it fell out that Adam's eyes should meet Eve's and they knew that the same suffering as had befallen Othniel was upon them. Adam's tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and it was with an effort that he threw out some words to Eve, hoping thereby to hide his trouble from her. He will weary of his mate, Eve, he said, and he would have continued to reassure her, but Eve's eyes were upon him. It is, perhaps, Iahveh's will to enlighten us, he said: so let us go to his altar, and pray that he may do so. We were there this morning, Eve answered. But we did not pray that we might be enlightened, he replied. Our prayers this morning were not heart-felt prayers, therefore Iahveh did not hearken to us. And so that we may be enlightened, Eve said, I will cast myself before him and bow myself three times, and repeat the prayers thou'st taught me. Let us go to the praying stone, and they went thither, and so heart-felt were Eve's utterances of the prayers he had taught her that Adam, on rising to his feet, was moved to draw her to him, and to kiss her again and again; and the emotion that their prayers to Iahveh had caused continued while they descended the hill-side. And it was on their way to the fig-trees that Adam said: See, Eve, how large the leaves are already, and in my prayers on the mount I heard Iahveh command that we weave garlands and wear them about our middles. Eve asked if the garland she had woven for her hair were not enough. Adam answered: He said about our

middles. When we go fishing, Eve persisted, may we not leave our garlands on the bank? Adam could not answer her, nor when she asked if the water were to wash away their garlands would they be answerable for the loss of them. Whilst climbing up the bank, she persisted, we shall be naked. No matter, the cold water will subdue us, Adam said. Eve was minded to reply: The water will grow warmer, which it did, and when in it our troubles will begin, if perchance shoulder should touch shoulder. The lord punishes us, Adam cried, for our transgressions. But we have not transgressed, Eve answered. Why should he punish us? The ways of the lord are mysterious, we may not strive to look into his heart, Adam replied, word that brought no distinct meaning to Eve's mind, but she wished to please Adam, and in accordance with his wish she did not gaze upon him as she often wished to do, but kept her eyes averted. It was her eyes that caused the rising of the flesh of which he was ashamed, for the lord had not vouchsafed the knowledge to him that he had bestowed upon Othniel. But the day will come when he will reveal the secret to us, said a voice within him, and with tears rolling down his cheeks he fell upon his knees and prayed till Eve could no longer keep her thoughts fixed on the great throne in which God sat, watchful over his creatures, lest they should transgress his will. So Adam had told her, this was his belief, and it was her desire to share his belief, but a bird in the lilac distracted her thoughts from God, for she perceived the bird was building itself a little house in the bush. It came with fibre in its beak, which it wove into the moss, and the inside of the nest was plastered with clay, and when the nest was finished Eve could see the bird flattening itself out in the nest, the head only appearing above the rim, the black eyes shining through the green leaves. She told the story of the nest to Adam one day after prayers, and they went to the

lilac bush and, finding five eggs in it, Eve said: Let us not disturb her nest, for we know not what her design may be.

The mate that had helped to build the nest now sat upon the bough above the nest, and Eve said: He sings to pass away the time of her labour. But of the design of the birds Adam could not tell Eve; for he had never noticed the ways of birds before, and was astonished when Eve said: Adam, the bird returns with worms to the nest; come, let us look into it, for it may contain something that our eyes have never seen. As you have already guessed, Alec, the nest contained chicks all gaping to be fed. Adam said to Eve: This is very wonderful, and the wonder of the twain seemed to deepen when a cat came about their tree, and the parent birds came down on to the pathway and challenged it to fight, shrieking at it, bidding it to go hence. Their eyes are like the sparks we see in the fire, Adam said, so angry are they. How they must love their young! Eve answered, and a great sorrow fell upon Adam and Eve, and he to himself and she to herself said: Why have we no offspring like the animals we see about us? The squirrels and the cats, and the rats and the mice, and the birds have offspring, and love their offspring; only we are alone. And Lilith, who saw all these things in her magic well, said: My time has come to go to the garden and finish the story.

CHAP. XXXIX.

HE will be somewhere about here, she said, watching for his chance, for all that is going on in the garden he knows well; and we shall come upon each other before long for sure if I keep marching up and down these woods. A pleasant place enough for walking they are, she continued, looking round, well pleased with the woodland she was in, for though the trees were close together up

above, there was plenty of room for walking between them—long, tall boles they were, as in the park over against Westport where I met you, Alec, for the first time, jumping from boulder to boulder, and climbing up the bank, saying you were sure that the master would not mind your having a look round for ferns. That was in the weeks back, and ever since we have been telling stories as friendly as any two men in the country. It seems strange that it should be so, but so it is; and now I must be getting on with my story of my lady Lilith, who was, at the time I'm speaking of, walking under the trees outside the garden, mindful of Lucifer, whom she knew to be about somewhere, and not far off, for she could get a smell of him in the air, and walking on whither her nose led her, she said: 'Tis thicker about here, a sour smell like that of a snake. But it cannot be that, and walking on farther, looking round at every step she took, she said: Something is here but my eyes cannot find it, and they have searched everywhere for it. She walked on, her eyes always set on the ground, never thinking that the one she was seeking might be in a tree till she heard a voice speaking to her, saying: Lilith, raise thine eyes and thou shalt find me, and when she raised her eyes, what do you think she saw but a big green and golden serpent coiled about the branches of a cedar with one great branch stretched out from the tree itself right over the garden wall, and the thought passed through her mind that it was a convenient branch for whosoever would pass over the wall into the garden, and that perhaps that was the reason why Lucifer had changed himself into a big serpent, a serpent being able to glide and lift himself, whereas a four-footed beast, or a two-footed, for a matter of that, would be making no progress at all. Thou hast guessed rightly, he said, answering her thoughts, for Lucifer being an archangel could see into the mind, and having knowledge of all that

was accomplishing on earth, said: Right well thou didst answer them, meaning the angels of the lord.

Adam and Eve are at variance, he continued, each with the other, and with Iahveh, who has refused to tell how Adam must conduct himself with Eve so as to get offspring from her. It is odd surely that he should desire offspring of that puny creature with sloping shoulders and wide hips, short legs and very dirty, Lilith rapped out, forgetful of the presence of her lord. It is true that Eve as she came to Adam from Iahveh's hands was not agreeable to his sight and smell; but a great change has come over Adam since he washed her and tressed her hair, Lucifer replied; and her legs are not shorter than thine, not in his eyes. Then, said Lilith, Iahveh has put a great spell upon him, blotting my image from his mind. But as soon as he sees me he will forget her; Iahveh's spell is—— My plan is better than a garden broil, Lucifer answered, and when Lilith asked him what these plans were, he said that his design was to provide Adam with the knowledge that God withheld from him. I was telling before the interruption—— Master, forgive me, Lilith cried, and Lucifer continued: Adam went to the praying stone and besought Iahveh to tell him how he should love Eve, but he only got commandments from Iahveh: Speak not of cocks and hens to me, said Iahveh; thou shalt not tread thy wife as a cock treads a hen, nor line her as a fox lines a vixen, nor cover her as the stallion covers the mare. How then? said Adam, and at this question Iahveh was angry, and with the temper flying out of both his eyes he bade Adam give his commandments to Eve, who was waiting to hear the joyful tidings as to the manner in which it is pleasing to Iahveh that mortals should obtain offspring.

Did Eve weep, master, when she heard that she was not going to bear children? No, said Lucifer, she answered Adam in words which she knew would please him, that

he would do well to observe the will of God, and to make it easier for him, she said she loved him sufficiently to live with him though he might never make a woman of her. Cunning little minx, Lilith cried, she tries to keep the man by agreeing with him in everything he says, and submitting to him in all things. But why, she asked, does Iahveh refuse to allow Adam and Eve to have children? For that he is tired of the long struggle he had before he was able to throw us into hell, Lucifer replied, and yearns to live at peace among his angels, but the victor is never altogether victorious. Ever since our overthrow Adam has been a perplexity to him, and the perplexity has deepened since Adam asked him how he might procure offspring. Iahveh is afraid that the new race may take our side, and together we might succeed in giving him a fall. Iahveh, Lucifer continued, is great at present, but there is a fate over the God, and he that is now on high lives in fear of a race of unbelievers; and to save himself he would forbid man to eat of the tree of knowledge. I will cross the garden wall and reveal the secret, Lilith cried. But, said Lucifer, Adam will know thee as his dream of old time. God has put a spell on him, said Lilith. Maybe he did, but I'm not sure of it, Lucifer replied. Well, what shall we do? she asked, and Lucifer said: By a stealthier method than by giving Adam the choice between thee and Eve, for remember that if he were to choose Eve we should be undone. I have thought of a better way, and for it I shall confide my snake shape to thee; in it thou shalt cross the garden wall, and as soon as Adam passes by the tree in which thou art hidden thou shalt lean out of the branch, and say: Adam, why so downcast, why so hopeless? Give thine ear to me and learn the secret.

CHAP. XL.

BUT before going on further with the story, Alec, I think I would like to give my legs a stretch. If your honour has a match about you I'd be glad to have a shaugh at the pipe. I'd like a smoke too, I answered, a cigarette! A cigar will take too long; and to keep Alec in good humour I spoke of Liadin and Curithir and the throbbing love night they had passed together, and Alec promised to give me his opinion of my story when I had finished it. I like the stipulation; and, Alec, you're a good listener. A story-teller must know how to listen, he answered, for 'tis out of stories a story comes. A maxim that deserves all my congratulations, I said, and as soon as we had finished smoking, I reminded him that Lilith, after exchanging shapes with Lucifer, coiled herself into a tree within hearing distance of the flowering bank on which Adam and Eve were sitting, Adam looking into the depths of the wood disconsolate, making up a story about a little bird that might come hopping along the branches and let out the secret to him. A welcome bird he would be, by my faith, cherished by the two of us, and allowed to eat his fill of the fruit-trees. But neither bird nor beast will come to our aid, and Adam continued to sit with his eyes averted from Eve, who, having pity for him, was thinking what she could say to console him, but everything that came into her head she threw out as likely to wound his feelings; till at last the silence seemed to her to be worse than anything she could say, and convinced that she could not leave him thinking any more she began talking to him about Lilith. And as soon as the name passed her lips she began saying to herself that Adam would not like to speak of Lilith, who might have left him for the reason that he did not know what the birds knew and all the beasts. But she was wrong in this, for Adam liked talking about Lilith, and Eve

was glad to see his face brighten, although it was hard to keep her jealousy from gathering in her face. She talked about Lilith soothingly, saying that she believed her to be a woman tall and thin as far as one could see through the mist that was about her always. 'Tis as if thou hadst seen her, Adam chimed in, for she would steal upon me like a mist in which I could see only a beautiful line of chin and ear; like those hills far away in the blue distance, he said. It was never in waking but in dreams that thou knewest her, Eve said. In dreams and between dreaming and waking. . . . Yet we walked in the garden together. You spoke together? Eve queried, and Adam told Eve that he remembered Lilith's voice and her silences. I do not know how she came, or whether it was out of the sky or out of the trees, but she came to me. And thou wast happy with her? I was happy and I was unhappy, Adam answered. Dost think, Adam, Eve asked sadly, that I was created to make thee unhappy? Ah, Eve, thou art blaming me now as Lilith used to do, Adam answered, and I'm thinking that all women are alike. I will try to tell thee everything, but it is hard to tell Lilith, for she is only clear to a man when he is not thinking about her at all. As soon as he tries to see or hear her she has gone. I would tell all I know lest thou shouldst think that I am keeping something back. Adam, I understand. But I haven't told thee that my love for thee is different from my love for her. I only loved her as we love the clouds; thou'rt here and kind and good, but Lilith was cruel and wicked, and when she was here she was yonder too. I could not lay hold on her, but thee I can hold and see and hear. She was only a beam of moonlight. I read in thine eyes that a gleam from the moon is better than the shining of midday to a man. Why wouldst thou put thoughts into my head that were never there? she said. If I am satisfied, why shouldst thou be dissatisfied? I will try to be satisfied, he replied,

and if anybody can help me it is thou, with thy sweet, gentle eyes and kindly hands. Lay thy hand upon my forehead for my head is hot, I would sleep a little, but before I sleep, tell me, Eve, that knowledge is not always better than ignorance and that if we knew what the birds and beasts know and the knowledge gave us offspring our happiness would not be greater than it has been. And he gazed into her eyes as if he would read her answer therein. I love thee well enough to live with thee, though my life go by without offspring, her eyes said.

At that moment two doves came down from the branches, love being easier on the ground than at perch. If he turn his head, she said, and see those birds, the sight of them will recall Iahveh's commandment. Would that they were not so noisy in their love, she continued to herself, the wood resounds with their kisses; if he turn his head he will deem the birds were sent to make a mock of him. Alas, said Adam, turning at the moment when the cock was treading the hen, these birds are more knowledgeable than we are. Shall we take our knowledge from them, and kiss as they kiss? And Eve, nothing loth, took Adam in her arms, and having kissed as they had seen the doves kiss, and suffered thereby many great and terrible piercings, she fell back in front of him like the hen. But Adam in this last moment remembered Iahveh's commandment, and a gloom beset his face. It may be that we shall be guilty of some great transgression, he said. Of what transgression shall we be guilty? Eve asked. Adam could not answer her, and so they sat estranged from each other until, unable to bear the estrangement any longer, Adam ran away through the trees up the steep path to the praying stone, leaving Eve absorbed in the thought that it might fall out that the end of all this would be that they would live on different sides of the garden, seeing each the other in glimpses only; and she asked herself if the meaning behind it all

was that Iahveh created her so that he might punish Adam because he had not joined him against Lucifer.

The thought that it might be so brought tears to her eyelids and she retired into the grove to weep unrestrainedly; and when there were no more tears for her to weep, her heart was moved to a great pity for the man who could not live enjoying things as they went by, but must needs pray. He will not come to me, said her failing heart, but she waited for him till the moonlight vanished. He will not come to me; he fears Iahveh more than he loves me. Ah! now he has fallen back, overcome with weariness, but as soon as he awakes he will pray again. If I do not leave some fruit for him he will not eat to-morrow.

CHAP. XLI.

HE has put the river between us, and we shall not see each other again but in glimpses, Eve said, as she walked absorbed in the mystery of God and man, asking herself why Iahveh should trouble himself as to their conduct on earth; for having exiled Adam, it would seem that he should be content to allow them to live according to the ways of the earth. She repeated the sacred name, and her unconcern in it reminded her of Adam's alarm when she had repeated it casually after hearing it from him for the first time. Iahveh is always the centre of Adam's mind, she muttered, and the stone altar came into her thoughts, and the day he had been propelled thither by fear of Iahveh; but there had been no fear in her mind; she had prayed because she had to live with Adam, and having to live with him, she must make herself according to his likeness as far as possible. But if Iahveh comes between us always, there is no life for me; and the task of winning him from Iahveh seemed beyond her strength. But if I can discover the secret he withholds from us,

his power over Adam will be lessened, she said; and she roamed the garden, continuing her search, sure at noon that love was stronger than hate, but at night, lying where they had so often lain together on the bank under the fig-trees, she cried: Iahveh is over all; and missing Adam by her when she awoke, tears flowed over her eyelids again; she often thought that her heart would break, and it might have broken if her courage had been less than her love. My task is to save him, she said, from Iahveh, and if I am borne away and dashed against the rocks, and whirled on and on till darkness falls over me, our troubles will be ended.

It was with these very words, Alec, that she turned down the hill-side towards the river, and finding a place that seemed shallow she waded into the stream, but did not reach the middle of it, when she slipped into a deep swirl of waters against which she strove, but was sucked under and came up again and sank again, all the while sore afraid that she would never look upon Adam again, which she would not have done if he had not come to her and put his hand under her chin, in that way upholding her. Neither to that bank must I take thee, Adam said, nor to the bank on which I left thee. But there are rocks in the middle of the stream, and upon them thou and I can talk if thou wishest to talk to me. If I wish to talk to thee? she repeated, and her look smote him to the heart. Why didst thou venture into the river and it in flood? he asked, when they were seated on the rocks. I was looking for thee, she said. The fruits I left for thee by the praying stone were untouched, so it cannot be else, I said to myself, than that he has put the river between us. And was not that well done? Adam replied. Should we not be thankful to Iahveh that he set a river flowing through Eden: for it is his will that we must live asunder like a pair of trees lest we break his commandment. Everything must be as thou wouldst wish it to be, Adam. But

how are we to live apart? We shall have to make two hoards of fruit, Adam replied, on which we shall live through the winter when there is little fruit, or none at all, on the trees. But I know not how to make a hoard. I will teach thee. The grapes will be ripe in a month from now, but they must be gathered and dried in the sun; the figs the same. The apples too may be saved. We shall sit on these stones, for this is the mearing; and thou'lt learn from me how these things may be done and to live without me. Thou'lt be lonely, no doubt, without me; the days will seem long and the nights too; but there is no other way. It shall be as thou sayest, she answered, and her arms went about him: it shall be as thou sayest. But do not make it harder for me, Adam said, and to disguise his great love of her he plunged into the pool. But after a little while he returned to her. We must try and bear our lives and live them as Iahveh seems to have willed that we should live them. Thou shalt live on the right bank of the river and I on the left bank, but we shall meet here on these rocks, he said, and I will instruct thee about the drying of fruits and thou canst make thyself comfortable in the hut that we built last autumn together. I shall build another hut on my side. But tell me, she said, how I may reach my bank. The current frightens me. I will swim with thee through the places where the river is deep and strong, and when thou'rt on the gravelly bank I will return unto the river, and remain on my side of it till thou comest out on to those rocks, which thou wilt do when thou hast need of me.

It would have been better, Eve thought, as she returned to the grove, if he had left me to drown, for I have made him unhappy; was woman created for man's unhappiness? Is unhappiness part and parcel of our lives; something we cannot escape from? But the beasts and the birds are not unhappy, and are never in doubt as to what path they should follow. Why cannot we live as they live? And

whilst trying to learn from them the secret of their happiness, she gathered such fruits as were ripe, and stored them as he had bidden her, and took pleasure in so doing, for she was doing his will. But the nights were long, and the calm dawns miserable to behold. At last remembrance came out of misery: he had told her that he would show her how the fruit should be stored!

Adam! Adam! she cried. And she had not to speak his name a third time before she saw his head above the water, and he rushing through it like a fish, so eager was he to be with her. As soon as he had climbed up beside her and shaken the water from his hair and beard they began to talk of the fruit she had gathered and the roof of the house in which she lived. At last he said: Thou hast wandered much in the garden. Yes; and have seen much, she answered him; birds and squirrels and mice and rats, cockchafers, beetles and the ordinary fly. But we are not as these and have been commanded to abstain from imitating them in their swyvings, he said. Cats, she said, come over the wall screaming after each other. But we are commanded, he said, by the God, to abstain till he reveals the secret of love—— And of offspring, she interjected. She had seen from a gap in the walls a herd of great animals with long hairy tails on their rumps and on their necks a yard of hair. Among these was one taller, handsomer, more powerful than the others, a sort of master among them; and one day she said he came whinnying, his ears cocked to meet a female. I judged her to be one, she being smaller, smoother, daintier than he was, like unto him as I am to thee, Adam. A strange match they made as they stood nosing each other, she shy, diffident, he eager and valiant, yet gentle with her always, though she was rough and angry with him, squealing betimes and kicking at him till at last, like one that accepts another's will, he drew away from her, regretfully, I thought, and then like one that had for-

gotten he began to graze a bit away. But he was only pretending to have forgotten her, for when she came forward, trying to entice him back to her, I could see that he was watching her, and every moment I expected him to leave off feeding, but it was a long time before she could get him to notice her. At last she managed to entice him from his feed; and this time he was bolder with her, beginning at once to bite her in the chest, in play, of course; licking her sides and biting her again. She seemed to like this play; his cozening seemed to her taste; but when he came to her haunches she squealed and kicked, without striking him, however, misdirecting her kicks perhaps of set purpose. And this play was continued for several days, she always inviting his intentions and never resenting them till he tried to throw his foreleg over her. So the day went by, ripening her, and when her time was come he raised himself up and, gripping her by the neck, he went in unto her, hugging her the while. And then? said Adam. Then, Eve answered, he dropped exhausted on his hooves, and they sniffed at each other once or twice before beginning to graze, keeping together apart from the herd.

But of what concern to us are the ways of beasts? Adam said, and hast thou forgotten Iahveh's commandments? It may be, she answered, that the God put a wall round the garden, but when thou'rt not by me I forget these things. I know of God only through thee, and am different from thee inasmuch as thou wast an angel once in heaven, but I'm a rib taken from thy side, else a handful of dust. For thou knowest not exactly how God created me, only that when thine eyes opened I was sleeping by thee. Wouldst thou, Eve, have me return to the other bank and live with thee like a beast? It shall be as thou dost wish it, Adam. But it being my wish always that thou shouldst be happy, or as little unhappy as may be, I would have thee go to him with no

desire in thy heart but obedience to his will only. Adam, leave me, Eve cried, but let me come to-morrow to these rocks, for though they are hard to sit upon it is better to see thee here than not to see thee at all. Thou mayest come here if thou wilt strive to make Iahveh's will thine and—— What else, Adam, is upon thy mind to tell me? Only this, Eve, that having looked over the wall, a thing that Iahveh has forbidden, it may fall out that in thy wanderings a voice may speak to thee out of a tree. Hast heard a voice, Adam, speaking out of yon trees? And Adam answered that it had seemed to him that he had heard a voice speaking out of a tree, saying he had but to listen to hear the secret. And thou didst not listen? Eve said. Iahveh forbid, he answered. And then thou fleddest, she said, to the thither side, leaving the praying stone without offering. I had hoped to find another, he answered, and Eve, guessing that the desire of prayer was again upon him, said: Why not cross the river for prayer? The evening skies are calm, and thy prayer will go up to Iahveh's nostrils and refresh him.

With words like these I'm telling she beguiled him over to her side of the river, and as soon as she saw him going up the hill-side with the fruits she had given him for offering, her eyes turned to the trees out of which the voice had spoken to him. The voice that he heard can only be Lilith's, she said, who would not have Adam withhold himself from me any longer, he having by now descended altogether out of angel kind into man kind. So she went to the tree that Adam had pointed out to her as the one out of which he had heard the voice speak: Whosoever is in this tree, let her or him tell me how I may be Adam's wife, and get offspring like the birds and the beasts, she cried, and as soon as the snake heard Eve, she stretched herself along the bough, and dropping a yard or two of herself said: I am Lilith, who was Adam's first wife, but in his mind rather than in his body. Lean

thy ear closer, lest Iahveh should hear and send angels to hunt me into hell again. Eve gave her ear, and having learnt from Lilith the way of man with a woman, she waited for Adam to return from the altar, all the while turning over in her mind the delightful modes of love she had learnt from Lilith.

Adam came to her full of God and unsuspicious, saying that after prayer he had bethought himself of the house they had lived in last winter, and how it might be repaired. If the wind comes under the door thou'lt come to the river and cry aloud for me, and it will not be long before I'm swimming to thee, though the floods be great in winter-time. The words came to Eve's lips to thank him, but she kept them back, and they walked to the house in silence. Thou'lt be building a house, she said, for thyself as good as this one, one that will be rain and wind tight, and he answered that it was as likely as not he would be building something, but he did not mind the wind and rain. But thou'lt find the cold weather hard to bear, and his eyes going round the store of fruit she had laid in, he said: Thou hast not gotten enough of this fruit to feed thee through the winter, more should be gathered; and they went through the garden shaking the boughs and gathering the fruit till the kindling of the evening star.

It was then in the dusk that Adam showed Eve how she should store the fruit, and when it was laid by for the winter the perplexed twain wandered from the house to the bank under the fig-tree, and with Adam by her side Eve was moved to tell him she had discovered the secret, but she withheld it from him, afraid to speak to him, so easily was he led away by words; but in spite of her silence, perhaps because of it, he began to speak once more of Iahveh's providence and his design, saying: Eve, if it be within his design that we beget children the secret how we shall beget them will not be withheld from us.

Adam, she answered, I cannot talk any more, and fell back amid the mosses, and his joy was so great that he could not get a word past his teeth, and when relief came they lay side by side, enchanted lovers, listening to the breeze that raised the leaves of the fig-tree, letting the moonlight through.

May we not, he asked, discover the secret again? Will the delight be as great? And she answered: We shall know that presently, and her arms went about him; and their delight was greater than before, and when they returned to rediscover the secret for a third time, Eve screamed she knew not whether it was from pain or pleasure, and her scream was so heartrending that Adam was frightened, and thinking he had killed his wife he sat up on the bank of delight and began to pray. But seeing he had done her no harm at all, he said: It is against God I have sinned, and my sin might never have been known if Eve had not screamed so loudly that she must have awakened Iahveh dozing in his golden chair, and if that misfortune has befallen us he will be sending his angels with flaming swords to sever off our heads. You see, Adam was well learned in the ways of God. But Lucifer, too, had had a long experience of heaven; and while Michael, Gabriel and Raphael were girding on their flaming swords he said: We must hide Adam and Eve from God's angels, who will destroy them and the seed of the new race that will bring about Iahveh's downfall in the years to come. Lilith answered: Master, as thou wilt.

CHAP. XLII.

BEFORE the ring of day Adam and Eve were hidden beyond the walls of the garden in deep caves, where they could not be discovered by the angels in search of them, for when the angels came into one cave, Adam and Eve

found outlets into other caves, and as every cave had two they went hither and thither, escaping the angels always, suffering hunger and thirst, for outside of the garden was all wilderness; only a few berries and roots could they find, but fruits nowhere. So it came to pass that in their flight from the pursuing angels they were several days without even a bilberry or a handful of cress wherewith to quench their longing. We can go no farther, Eve, the angels must take us here, Adam said. And Eve answered: There is a way out of our trouble; and he asked her: Which way is that? and Eve replied: The way that we came into it. And Adam said: I understand thee not, and Eve said: Was it not I that brought all this trouble upon thee? Was it not I that loved God not at all and would not live according to his commands? But, Eve, thou camest with me to the altar and prayed, and we made offerings of fruit to Iahveh. But my heart was not in prayer, Adam, and the offerings to Iahveh always seemed to me a waste. Iahveh had no place in my heart nor in my thoughts, and it was to divide thee from Iahveh that I listened to Lilith; for in my foolishness I said: If I bring the secret to Adam he will forget Iahveh. But Iahveh is all-powerful and we are overwhelmed with hunger and thirst. I would give thee back to Iahveh. . . . How can I be given back to Iahveh? Adam asked, and Eve answered: My thoughts are not wandering, Adam, but are set upon undoing the wrong I have done, and the undoing can be accomplished in that river if we can reach it. In the pool from which thou didst save me I will drown, and Iahveh's fallen angel will be restored to grace, and he will be put back into the garden; he will be happy again amid flowers and fruits, and the pleasant rays that fall upon the altar at noon will draw him unto prayer. Prayers are dearer to thee, Adam, than I ever could be. Lead me to the river, Adam, let one be happy if both may not be. I am nothing, I

was made out of one of thy ribs or out of a handful of mould by Iahveh for thy companionship. I am nothing, but thou wast once God's angel. God is all-powerful. Let my death give thee back to Iahveh. But, Eve, there is no happiness for me on this earth except with thee, and hast no thought of the child in the womb? And hast thou no love for him? I have love for my child, but my love of thee, Adam, is greater, and my child must die with me that the world be redeemed from sin. So it would seem. Iahveh will accept my death as an atonement. Lead me to the river, Adam.

As we have lived so we must die, Adam replied; and the twain sat side by side against the rocks, and folded their arms and waited for the power of Iahveh to fall upon them. And they did not know how long they had waited, for time seemed at a standstill, but in the midst of their stupor they were awakened by a voice, and Adam said to Eve: That is no angel's voice, and Eve said: Whosesoever voice it be concerns us not, for the end is nigh. Thy will be done, Adam, if it be that thou shouldst die with me unrepentant. But the voice brought them life in the shape of a lamb, one of the mountain sheep that the angels had frightened with their flaming swords. He had become lost in the caves, or maybe had been sent thither, Alec, by Lucifer himself, who looked to the race of men to bring about the overthrow of Iahveh. Whosoever sent the lamb, it was the lamb's blood that saved the twain in the cave and assured the victory, accomplishing slowly, but always accomplishing from that day to ours, Alec.

Since there is no fruit in the wilderness, we must kill and eat always, Adam said, and from henceforth his days were spent fashioning weapons, and Eve's in weaving nets, wherewith they were able to encompass beasts and birds. So did the twain live, flying from the angels of the lord from cave to cave, Eve bringing forth Cain in

the first year of banishment, and Abel in the second. And when daughters were born to them, Cain took one sister to lie with him; she conceived and bore Enoch, with whom Cain was so well pleased that he named the city he built after his son. After Enoch came Irad, and Irad begat Mehujael; Mehujael begat Methusael; and Methusael begat Lamech; and Lamech took unto him two wives, the name of one was Adah and the name of the other was Zillah, and Adah bore Jabal. He was the father of those that dwelt in tents, and his brother's name was Jubal, and he was the father of harp and organ players; and Zillah bore Tubal-cain, the craftsman in brass and iron, and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

Very soon the earth was covered with men, and the angels looked down from heaven, and seeing that the daughters of men were fair, they lusted after them, and the children that were born of woman and angel kind were giants, and God said: The children of these giants will join with Satan's legions and rise up against me. My power will be overthrown! So he called together his cohorts, and gave the command unto Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, and these going forth drove against the celestial lechers, surrounded, overpowered and bound them, and threw them into the centre of the earth for time everlasting. And Iahveh said unto his archangels: You have done well, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, you have redeemed my heaven of lewd angels; but giants still abound, and being tired of long wars, we will open the sources of the sea and drown the world. And the angels replied: Thy will be done, Lord, on earth as it is in heaven, and the sources of the seas were opened.

But one man built an ark and it was with his progeny that the earth was replenished. And God said, belike fire will succeed where water failed, and he showered brimstone and fire all over the world, and burned out every man but one, Lot, and his daughters, and with these

the world was again replenished, the first daughter saying to the younger: Our father is old, there's not a man to come in unto us after the manner of all the world. Come, let us make our father drink wine and we will lie with him that we may preserve the seed of our father. And what the older had done the younger did the next night. And seeing how all his designs had failed him, and that the race of man was indestructible, Iahveh bowed his head, saying: My years are numbered. I am dying and shall die, for the years are coming when men will no longer believe in God.

CHAP. XLIII.

NOW, Alec, that is the end of the story that I composed last week, and you being the shanachie of old Connaught I should like to hear my story criticised by you, to hear it blamed or praised, if there be anything in it that seems worthy to you of praise or blame. Well, your honour, there are fine things in your story, but I'm sure Father Kennedy wouldn't have any truck with any story about Adam and Eve that isn't in the Bible. The Talmud, I interjected. But forget Father Tom and tell me what you think of my story. A wonderful story, your honour, for if I rightly understand you, it isn't more than a week old; the best I've ever heard at that age, and when it has been seven or eight years in your head it will be as good as ten-year-old John Jameson. That's how it is with mine. At first they are poisonous stuff, but year by year they mellow, and after sleeping and dreaming in my head, like the whisky in the wood, they come out good, sociable and kind, and them that listen become as good and kind and gentle as the whisky itself. You think that my story will improve on keeping? I do, your honour. I think you're right, I felt that I was relating only a rough and ready version. As I told you, my stories are eye stories, yours

are ear stories. But I would not have your honour thinking that I was making little of your story; it's a grand story as you have told it: Adam praying on his two knees in front of Eve: I have killed her, I have killed her, she is dead and all; all is done and damn the deed! But of course he soon saw that he had not done her a bit of harm, and that she was ready for some more of the same trouble. Faith, I give in to your honour; the shanachie of London has pounded the shanachie of Westport. There are grand things in it, the great squeal of a screech that Eve let off, and himself frightened out of his very life, and every cat of the cats, and every creature of the creatures, in the same fright—a grand hullabaloo—a squeal, a whoop and a whistle, and then all silent again. Faith and troth, Alec, it's yourself that should have been the story-teller, for you have put a polish on Eve's love cry that raises a black envy of you up into my heart, and I wouldn't be surprised if Synge himself were stirring in his grave at this very moment.

END OF VOL. I.

A STORY-TELLER'S HOLIDAY

VOLUME TWO

A STORY-TELLER'S HOLIDAY

CHAP. XLIV.

A FEW days after my telling of the Garden of Eden I caught sight of Alec under the walls of the old mill looking out for a safe place to cross the river, and whilst watching him jump from boulder to boulder I began to wonder if the new story he was coming to tell me would be about a monk or a nun or a hermit. As soon as he was up the high bank I asked if it were a long one and he answered that it was a good-bye he'd come to bid me, having heard in the town that I was leaving Westport at the end of the week. But I won't be delaying the work, your honour, he said, and on my calling to him he came back saying that there was no place for the imagining of stories like a seat by a brook. Like water they do be coming up, foaming and swirling as if they couldn't get on fast enough. The old story-tellers always looked for their stories by running water, I replied, and asked him if he were sure he hadn't one about him. Well, no, your honour, it's the other way round this time; I thought I'd come to you for a story—the like o' them the publishers do be ferreting in their pockets for the notes and the gold to pay you for. I'd like to be hearing one of them just as it comes out of your head for the first time. I think you must take me for a keg, Alec, always on tap as soon as the spigot has been driven in. Isn't every shanachie like that? he answered, and don't the country people be asking me for stories till the last sod of turf is dwindled down into ash? A story, Alec, with-

out Iahveh or fairies, not even a priest in it nor devils, not so much as a serpent—an English or an Irish story, which? I wouldn't stick your honour to one country, Alec answered, but I might get the hang of an Irish story better than an English one. And sure an Irishman the like of yourself wouldn't be hard put to tell an Irish story. If he have one to tell, Alec. Aren't stories always buzzing in a shanachie's head, trying to get out, the way flies do be on a pane? A Connaught story, Alec? And why for not? Aren't you out of Connaught yourself, and out of the heart of it, out of the county of Mayo, like myself? Faith, it'll be the Ballinrobe cock against the Westport rooster! I don't know that I can think of an Irish story, Alec, unless. . . . Unless what, your honour? Unless I start out of an old memory. The best stories are hatched out of old memories, he answered. An old dog for the road, and an old memory for a tale. Perhaps you are right, Alec. I have a story that I heard bits of from an old man of Kiltamagh, whom I used to meet coming up the drive muttering to himself. He had a story that I never heard the end of, for there never was time to tell it all. My governess or my father or mother would always call me away before the end, and so I never heard what became of Tadhg . . . a long story, Alec. No good story is a long story, he answered, and the day is all in front. I'm afraid the telling will take more than a day. Sure, if it does your honour can be telling it in chapters till the end of time, or a week itself. It is a long story for telling— A story for reading? he asked, and a little disheartened, for I felt the words: for reading, to be a disparagement, I reminded Alec of his words: Stories ripen in the mouth like apples on a sunny shelf. They do so, he answered; they do indeed. Trust a good tongue to put a good skin on its stuff. In the third or the fourth telling the pink comes out on it, and from that on 'tis as juicy in the mouth as a blackberry in Samhain.

You've heard of Richard de Burgo, second Earl of Ulster? I have, and troth, as often nearly as I've heard tell of Oliver Crummel, the curse of himself on him. But I can't say that I know much more about De Burgo than I do about Crummel, for every time the uncle was about to tell me of the Great Earl the pipe broke under his teeth or he'd say: It's as dirty as the bottom of a bog! and by the time he'd cleaned the pipe De Burgo and his red head were forgotten. So now on with you! I have no story to tell of the Earl, Alec, but of Ulick, his son by a Frenchwoman who came over to Ireland with a troop of French singers. A bastard! said Alec. And what of that? I asked. No more than that I never heard the uncle tell of a De Burgo bastard. A man may have had a bastard without your uncle hearing of it. Sure he may and welcome, and unbeknownst to the priest himself for that matter, though 'twould be a job as long as Father M'Loughlin is in the county of Mayo. Or it may be, Alec, that my story is a Mayo story and never got across into Galway. All the same, it was from Timothy Moran of Kiltamagh I got it, or the best part of it. A fine old story-teller he was, and I am not going too far if I say there never was a story-teller in Galway that couldn't learn something from Timothy, whether in the telling of stories or the making of them. I can see him still when I look back into the past, a tall, lean man, well known along the road winding through Mayo from beyond Westport to Castlebar and on to Cong—a familiar figure in our walks, who often met us, garrulous and courteous, and followed us a little way, his old caubeen in his hand, his grey hair floating in the wind; or it might be he would pass without seeing us, walking with bent knees, bobbing his head, composing, my governess told me, and forbade me to run after him, saying that my interruption might cost him a fine bit of story. But one day we came upon him as we approached our

gates, which he opened for us, asking if he had my leave to take a short cut across the demesne. It will save me a mile of road, he said, for I'm on my way to Ballyholly. Ballyholly was one of our villages, and he shuffled along with us up the drive and across the park till we came to the bridge that my great-grandfather built when he came back from Spain, a tall, peaked, three-span bridge, out of proportion to the tiny stream that flows beneath. When your grandfather built that bridge, said Alec, there was more water in the lake than there is now. Lough Carra isn't half the size it was since the drainage. It may be so, Alec; but I'm thinking now more of Timothy Moran than of the water that was taken out of Lough Carra, and he was half-way up the bridge when I called after him, remembering suddenly that a ten-mile walk makes a man hungry; he had come from Castlebar; so I invited him to the kitchen, saying: The cook will give you your dinner, Tim, and I'll ask a shilling from father, who if he's out with the race-horses will give it to you next time you come.

A great old story-teller was Timothy, and many legends I heard from him in the stable-yard, whither I was forbidden to go, and in the woods hiding from my governess—legends long passed out of my mind and out of the mind of the world. However closely I search my memory, I come on names only, a phrase, mayhap a broken outline. Of one story I have a beginning, a middle, and an end, a bare, meagre outline, it is true, but an outline, however thin, is enough for a story-teller, and I remember that it commenced well with an account of a ship bringing a troupe of gleemen and gleemaidens from Honfleur to Galway— May I be interrupting your honour to ask what are gleemen and gleemaidens? The English word, Alec, for mummers. When I was a child the lads in Mayo would be about in the weeks before Christmas gathering up every bit of ribbon; and cross-

gartered and with streamers in their hats; they'd go from big house to big house dancing and singing: The wren, the wren, the king of all birds! No more than that do I know about our Mayo mummers. Enough, your honour, for me to understand that the gleemen and maidens that came over from France were like our own mummers, cross-gartered fellows. Yes and no, Alec; there were lots of queer leggings and some petticoats among them, but they came with lutes, gitterns and rebecks instead of whistles and bagpipes. I beg your honour's pardon for breaking in on you with a question. The fault is not yours, Alec; had I kept to Timothy's own words and spoken of mummers, you would have understood at once— And would have had no need to interrupt your honour, just as you interrupted Timothy. No doubt I interrupted Timothy often, and to his great discomfort, for Timothy did not like being stopped in a story to answer questions. He liked better to let his tongue run on, his hearers picking up as much as they could without finding fault with what they heard, leastways not till his back was turned and he was beyond the door. I am that way myself very often, said Alec, for there's nothing that spoils a story more than a snorter in the corner, butting in again and again. So be it, Alec; and in my turn I'll get on with the story, saying that when I pressed Timothy to tell which were the better: our mummers or the French, he'd answer that there was nobody alive now with any knowledge of the mummers that came from France in the beautiful ship with the carven prow in the days of the great Red Earl, and if I pressed him still further, he'd say: I'd like to be getting on with my story, young master. Then begin, Timothy, with the carven prow and tell us again how the sea-woman's breasts looked out over the waves, just as you did last time, and then go on to the Norman nobles who welcomed the mummers with the best of everything

in their castles. Whereupon Timothy would break in with a bit of history, telling that the Normans did not conquer Ireland as easily as they did England; and being as good a patriot as he was a story-teller, he was apt to become long-winded in his account of William's victory, saying that he would never have got one if the arrow hadn't fallen into Harold's eye. I always wished that Timothy would skip the battle of Hastings, and now I'll skip it myself, telling you no more than that Timothy believed the mummers were brought over from France much more for the fine reports they would spread of the riches of Ireland than for their jiggings and jugglings. And rightly or wrongly, Timothy would have it that it was touch and go with the Normans in Ireland in the beginning of the fourteenth century. They wore us down, he'd say, for whilst we had but one country they had three, getting soldiers and armour from France and Flanders and England; and in our linen tunics we could do nothing against men in armour, for if we did get a battle we couldn't follow them into their castles, so it was all the same whether we lost or won in the field; we were bet in the end. I often wondered how he would get back from castles, shields, breastplates and swords, to the cross-gartered mummers I was waiting to hear about. He was a long time getting back, but he got back at last, and very ingeniously, saying that if it took William five hours of an afternoon to conquer England, it didn't take Louise Chastel, the lutanist, more than the same number of minutes to capture the Earl. Go on telling about Louise, I'd cry; you didn't tell us enough last time. Even in those days I had an exceeding relish for Louise Chastel's victory in the Galway castle, and did not wish Timothy to skip a single word of it.

Now, gentlemen, ladies, and clergy, he'd say, recalling the address of a shanachie of old time, listen if you would

hear how a great man can be undone in body and soul by a sinful woman, sent over from France just as Delilah came over from the Philistines for the undoing of Samson. On the night of a gathering in Richard de Burgo's castle to welcome the mummers the wicked work was done; for the Earl had no head for a woman, and in the first half of Louise's song he was like a gossoon after his first noggin of porter, and she wasn't well into the second half when he was pushing his way through his guests, saying that he must ask the gleemaiden to sing a song he had heard his mother sing in his boyhood. If you will be turning your shoulders a little askew . . . he'd say to the man in front of him, and the man would move as best he could, for the crowd was very thick. And the Earl continued to struggle through it, never stopping, not even when he came to the big pillar against which his wife was leaning with her children about her; he pushed past her—if the devil were after him he couldn't have pushed harder. So hot was he after Louise that she had barely finished her song when he was in front of her looking into her eyes, and everybody in the castle asking: Now, what is he going to do next? Will he take her in his arms and carry her off? But they didn't think he'd go so far as that, with all his friends and family looking on. Now, gentlemen and ladies and clergy and all who are listening to my story, understand that what these two felt for each other is what you'll have heard tell of—love at first sight, and a disgraceful sight it was, and shouldn't have happened before the clergy, and might have ended badly if one of the mummers hadn't had the good thought to start singing; another, guessing that something was up, began to dance, and whilst these were dancing and singing a third mummer threw knives into the air and caught them by their handles; and between the three of them the eyes of the company were distracted from the Earl and his

lutanist at the end of the hall. And when the singers and dancers and jugglers had finished their feats of skill the Earl and the lutanist were no longer in sight; and the night was far gone before they came from the window-seat where they had hidden themselves for talking, maybe for kissing, the Earl promising all the while to build Louise the beautifullest house in Ballinrobe and fill it with chairs and tables and carpets and pictures of all sorts, and to put gold bracelets on her arms and diamonds on her head and I know not what else—maybe pearls on her ankles, for he was clean out of his senses that evening.

Such is my best memory, Alec, of Timothy's story of the falling in love of Richard de Burgo and Louise Chastel, the lutanist that came over from France in the ship with the carven prow, but a very poor memory indeed it is of Timothy's patter, which came like the brook yonder, shaping itself into pools and running away again into bubbling eddies. A great talker he was surely, the best that was ever heard in Mayo, saving your presence, Alec. And your honour's too, Alec answered. You know Ballinrobe, Alec? I have been through it going to Cong, your honour. And you remember the river Robe at the bottom of the hill, flowing from Lough Carra into Lough Mask under an avenue of limes? Limes are always, and as likely as not there were limes in the days of the great Earl; but there was no bridge, if we are to believe Timothy, who always described the Earl as dashing through the ford as hot as be damned. His own words this time, your honour, I'll go bail for them! Timothy never used the same words twice over, Alec; he kept to the old framework, introducing new inventions, and it was difficult to say which version, the one you heard last or the one you were listening to, was the better. Nobody could choose between the different versions, for nobody remembered

what he had heard before, Timothy himself least of all. I don't know if you know the word gusto, Alec? Faith, I do not. Well, I can't give you as good a definition as I'd like to—blarney is as near to gusto as any word I can think of at the moment, and Timothy's blarney was so soft and winning that his hearers lifted their heads to it, happy as the flowers themselves when the south wind is blowing.

Five words and a smile were enough to capture us, compelling acceptance of the bits we had heard before without question; none but my insistent little self ever thought of interrupting Timothy. He and the times he lived in are coming back to me now. There's magic in the spoken word, Alec; I remembered Timothy when you told me the story of the nuns of Crith Gaille— And your honour liked the story of the two priests— Yes, I liked them all; and your telling of them often set me thinking not only of Timothy but that the written word is a poor thing compared with the spoken. But it's a dirty bird, said I to myself, that fouls its own nest, and I fell to thinking that each has its place in art, the spoken word more buoyant and joyful but less precise and complete than the written word—ah, that was the fault with Timothy's stories. He left out the parts of the story that didn't come to him as he walked the roads; there was no word about Ulick's childhood in Ballinrobe. And your honour thinks there should have been? No, Alec, no; Timothy couldn't have been other than he was; and I being what I am, remember that a child goes to his mother for stories, Louise had no stories to tell her son but French ones, and so a love of France was rooted in him at an early age; and a great love of his mother, too, possessed him, for they were always alone together, and I cannot forget that there must have been times when she could bear her loneliness no longer, waiting for the Earl to come clattering up the street on his

horse. But Timothy was not interested in Louise's loneliness; I am, and therefore I hear her in my thoughts confiding her loneliness to her son, and he espousing her cause with childish enthusiasm as they sat before the fire in their high-backed chairs till Louise started to her feet: Bed-time, my child, bed-time! No, mother, not yet; go on talking about lonesomeness. Your honour is coming to a pretty bit, said Alec, but I'm asking myself how Timothy could tell all that passed between mother and son and he roaming the roads always. Since we are story-telling together I'd say to you that he had to choose three or four things, just as I have to myself, leaving the words to chance. All the same, Alec, he might have told us how questions began to arise in Ulick's mind, for even in his early teens the child could not have helped asking himself why he lived in a house different from all the other houses in Ballinrobe, alone with his mother, and why his father never remained with them for more than three or four days at a time, saying he had a castle to build at the other end of Mayo. His father and mother would be careful not to say anything before him that would set him thinking, but sooner or later he'd catch a word spoken by the Earl to Louise whilst he waited for his horse to be brought round from the stables, such words as: A castle is needed in the north; I cannot trust— Ulick, in my imagination, failed to catch the man's name, and sought it till he wearied of seeking it and began to wonder what the man had done to merit a castle being built to lock him up in; I like to think of Ulick asking himself if nobody lived in castles except under lock and key. In the time I am telling, Alec, a great harp-maker lived in Ballinrobe, one Donogh OBrien, and his workshop was such an attraction for Ulick when he came into his teens that he was often truant from his lessons, spending long afternoons learning how to use the adze and chisel and saw when his

mother would have had him by her side, her lute between them. But Ulick's truancy from his lessons was not the reason why she forbade him Donogh's workshop; she was afraid lest he should hear in the talk always going about the tables at which the apprentices worked that his father was no other than the great Earl. Was there anything in Timothy's story about the workshop? Alec asked me, and I answered that there must have been some mention of it, for Donogh OBrien was one of the great harp-makers of Ireland; and I continued that the mother could not do else than forbid Ulick to waste his time trying to become a harp-maker, a thing he wished to be. But she could not answer him why he might not become a harp-maker, nor could she keep him from knowing who his father was indefinitely—she knew that; and missing Ulick from the house, she would sit thinking of him in the workshop. Donogh would tell him nothing, but Donogh could not keep the apprentices from speaking, and even if he succeeded in keeping them from speaking of the Earl in Ulick's presence, Ulick would not fail to notice that on his approach the apprentices' talk would change quickly, one asking another if he had taken his chisel; and a hunt for a chisel or an adze or a mislaid harp-string would carry the talk away from the Earl, who would not again be mentioned. This is how the harp-maker's workshop must have appeared to the mother as she sat thinking of her son, and she would send for him or go and fetch him herself. And the end of all this would be that Ulick would come to his mother, saying: I know my father, but who is my father? His name, mother—tell it to me. Is he the great Earl himself that I hear talked of wherever I go? Thou art keeping a secret from me; why should I not know my father's name? Louise may have often sought for a name that would satisfy her son's curiosity; she may have even asked the Earl to help her, till at last

he said: The boy is growing up and must be told. And a great event in the lives of mother and son it was when she told him his father was the great Earl de Burgo. My father the great Earl de Burgo! But mother, why dost thou cry! for it is a great thing surely to be the son of Earl de Burgo? A great thing it would be, Ulick, if thou couldst inherit thy father's title and estates, but these must go to the Earl's son John, and after John to John's son; and though all the Earl's children by his wife Margaret, daughter of Sir John de Burgh of Lanvalay, were to die, thou wouldst still be no more than Ulick de Burgo, or Ulick Chastel if thou shouldst choose my name instead of thy father's. Louise would beg her son not to repeat to his father anything she had told him, but even if we accept Ulick as one who would keep this promise to his mother, the house in Ballinrobe would lose all its innocency and happiness; the son would be constrained in his talk with his father, and when Louise died— So she died? Yes, of a chill caught after a day's fishing on Lough Corrib, and according to Timothy, was buried in Ballinrobe at the end of May, 1314. Alec, I have always thought of the Earl and Ulick walking together in the orchard on the hillside above the Robe, Ulick now somewhere between twenty-two and twenty-five, the Earl over fifty. In that walk the Earl must have spoken to his son of his birth, though he had never spoken of it before, and of his future, telling him that when he, the Earl, died, Ulick would find his bitterest enemies among his half-brothers and sisters, and that it would be better for him to seek a career for himself in France, his mother's country. I shall be better able to help thee in France or in England than I can in Ireland—in every way, with money and by my influence. He might have spoken these very words; most likely he did. He spoke them right enough, your honour; you may bet your bottom dollar on that; for it's never been otherwise in Ire-

land from that day to this, the man in the big house sending his bye-blow to America when the time came for him to marry a fortune that would pay for the cards and the port wine. But, Alec, this time it was the opposite, for whereas the hunting squires sent their bastards to dig the American railways, the Earl allowed his son to seek a career for himself in France, none being open to him in Ireland because of his disgraceful birth. Once gone, gone for ever, he would say in the walk through the orchard over against the river. But I cannot let thee go, Ulick; it cannot be in the nature of things that I should lose thee too. Nor can it be that I should remain in Ireland to meet enemies in thy children, should I survive thee, Ulick would answer his father.

Father and son must have spoken openly to each other after the funeral, but for one reason or another we do not know, and we shall never know, why Timothy passed over this part of the story, telling no more than that Louise died in May, 1314, and that at the end of September in the same year Ulick, wearying suddenly of hunting grouse with falcons over the hills of Lough Mask, stepped on board the Earl's hooker at Cong, his mind made up to leave Ireland for France and seek a career for himself among the trouvères. I shall be the last, he answered his father, and I beg thee not to oppose my wishes, adding thereby to my misfortunes. And the Earl, seeing that there could be no gainsaying Ulick, said: Son, it breaks my heart to lose thee; after thy mother thou art the dearest thing on earth to me; but I will let thee go to France on a condition. And what condition is that? Thou'lt need a gleeman in France, and what better gleeman could a trouvère have than my harper, Tadhg O'Dorachy, the greatest in Ireland, the favourite pupil of Finn Lorcan? He will be able to help me, Ulick answered; he will follow my voice in the songs that I shall sing under castle windows or in great as-

semblies. Thou art a great father and a good father and a kind father (now and again, Alec, I come upon Timothy's own words). Every day that I stop in Ireland will be an uneasy day for me, so let me go to-morrow. Art thou in that haste to leave me? Will not the end of the week do as well? At the end of the week, if it be thy will, father, and if thy little tribe of legitimates are not returning from Portumna before then. For the first time the Earl turned a dark face on his son, and in a perilous moment Ulick became aware of his likeness to his father—they were both tall, lean, white men with blond beards. But it was not the likeness to himself in his son that withheld the Earl's fist, but Ulick's dark eyes, which reflected his mother; to strike his son, he felt, would be like striking Louise. And seeing that his father's anger had died out of his face, Ulick kept back the words that came to his lips: Had I been legitimate, father, thou wouldst have struck me! Instead of speaking these words, which might have separated them for ever—for a long time at least, he put forth a curious hand, and lifting the border of his father's cloak he said: Forgive me, father, but a young man cannot see a cloak handsome as the one hanging from thy shoulders without examining it. Wouldst thou have my cloak as a last present? and lifting it from his shoulders the Earl placed it upon his son's, and stood in admiration of the sable collar and cuffs and the green silk lining. What suits me suits thee! And they were as dear to each other as they had ever been in the interval between the Earl's last words and the entrance of a servant with news that Tadhg O'Dorachy was waiting audience. Bring him to me, the Earl answered, and a moment after a small man with a long, grey face came in, to whom the Earl addressed himself quickly, saying: Tadhg, the news I have for thee to-day is a great advancement in thy fortunes. Thou art bidden by me to France to make known

the Irish harp, and thou'lt journey thither with my son. With your son I shall not be separated from you, great Earl, the builder of my destiny, and I would make the Irish harp known all over the world, could I see how it can be done. With thy genius, Tadhg, which thou canst not leave behind. Faith, if my harp-playing were taken from me little would be left of poor Tadhg, and I'd walk as shamed as Adam after the fall. You will ride together to Dublin, where you will find a ship in the harbour ready to sail for the Thames. But isn't the Thames an English river, my lord? The Thames is an English river and my son goes thither with despatches; and when he has delivered these to Edward of England thou'lt sail with him from Southampton to Honfleur, and on thy arrival in France thou'lt ride with him from castle to castle, following his voice on thy harp when he sings under his lady's window or stands up in a great assembly. I shall do thy will, great Earl, in exile as I have done it at home. I would not have thee whimper before me, Tadhg. My tears are of joy, my lord, at the honour you do to me. Then weep on, Tadhg, but listen whilst weeping. I can trust thee to remind my son in time of need that it is not my will he should fare without an armed escort, and on arriving at an inn I would have thee keep thine eyes open for the thieves that entice young men with small winnings till they have won all their possessions; even with these they find little content, and are not satisfied till their dupes stake their future fortune on the throw. From the next danger—that of women, my son has naught to fear. His grace and bearing will inspire only thoughts of love; and should it come to pass that my money is not at hand to pay for a needed suit of Italian armour, the lady's jewels will be given to the Jews, so ardent will she be to see my son lay a champion low. Father, it seems to me that thou dost ask too much of my gleeman, for in thinking how he can protect me

against the dice box and the ladies we shall meet on our journey he will neglect his chief employment: his harp and the writing of my songs for me. I beg thee to keep silence, Ulick, whilst I give my orders to my harper. All the same, there is truth in thy words, and I will take heed of them. The ladies that will dangle themselves about thee may be left to the care of their own tempers and dispositions, and to keep them from harm is no part of Tadhg's business; but should thy thoughts turn to the graver issue of love: marriage, I would be warned by him. So, father, thou wouldst not see me married? Till a man weds he is his father's son, but wedded he is a woman's thrall. I would not lose my son, Tadhg. There is more to tell, but if my say be prolonged thou'lt forget more than thou mayest retain of my instructions. But should my son fall into sickness I would hear of it without delay. . . . Something has slipped my mind that was in it a few moments ago. Now, what can I have forgotten? That if I miss him, said Tadhg, from his place in church at the celebration of the Mass, and from the Communion table— I would have thee keep a friendly watch over my son without spying upon him. Now leave us; my son and I have much to consider, and when Tadhg was without, Ulick said: Father, I did not break thy talk with thy harper to ask why I should go to France by way of England. I would send thee to England with despatches so that Edward may confer a knighthood upon thee, which he will do at my request; and here are letters to many in France that will receive thee more favourably as Sir Ulick than they would . . . If thou hadst not given me thy cloak to wear, dear father. At which the Earl laughed, saying with tears in his voice: Thou art my son truly. And having no more words, the Earl and Ulick walked over to the window, to watch a ship coming up the bay, furling her sails as she approached the wharves.

A ship from Honfleur, said the Earl, that calls at London, doubtless. I would sail in her, Ulick answered, and escape the weariness of a long ride across Ireland with thy little harper. It is true that with favouring winds thy faring may be shorter by sea than by land, but I would not have thee blown into the ocean.

After speaking these words the Earl seemed to forget his son, though he was standing by him. He is thinking of mother, not of me! Ulick said to himself, and his own thoughts leaping forward carried him in vision to within a few hours' ride of Dublin, where he was in person five days later, turning in his saddle to ask Tadhg how many days' sailing it was from Dublin to the Thames. Tadhg answered him that if the winds were fair they would reach the Thames within a week. But if this calm continues—look round you, master, and see if there be wind enough to fill a sail. Not enough to lift the thistle-down, for that last lot was caught in yon hedge, where it can do no harm; but there goes another lot, drifting up again, to float far away and settle in somebody else's garden. Even the aspen is quiet, said Ulick, and I would sail from Dublin in a ship with two masts and a square sail on each. Make your mind easy, your honour; we have a day's riding ahead of us, and there'll be many a change in the wind between this and then. But there's no height beneath that branch for a horse and man to pass under; come round this way and overtake the young youth herding pigs in the field yonder. Whither lies the sea, my good man? You'll get a sight of it when you have passed the small hills. Sight of a windless sea, no doubt, cried Ulick, one only fit for oars! Outside Howth there'll be wind enough for plenty of pleasant sailing, the pigherd cried back, if you don't run into one of them noisy gales moving about at this time of year somewhere in the north. God save you both! And from pigherd to pigherd they rode, inquiring out the

way, till they came within sight of the sea. As I foresaw it, a waveless sea! said Ulick. We'd do well to keep from talking about waves, and we on our way to England. We'd do better, Tadhg continued, to keep our eyes open for the river Liffey, that we are to meet in a great plain not a day's journey from Dublin. And being near our journey's end, with a great plain before us, I'm thinking the Liffey must be wandering about here. Behind those bushes as likely as not, Tadhg; and riding forward they came to the Liffey gurgling over shingle. A safe ford is before your honour, said Tadhg. And riding their horses into the water they continued their journey along the right bank till they came in sight of a great cathedral, which on inquiry from a passer-by they learnt was Christchurch, built by the Danes, and saw the two churches on the left bank over against Ostman's Bridge. And at the bottom of the steep hill in front of you are the city's gates, said the passer-by. After thanking him for his courtesy, they began the descent of the hill. Now, which is to come first, the Mayor or the city? Ulick said, drawing rein. Tadhg's instructions from the Earl were that Ulick should pay his respects to the Mayor on reaching Dublin. It is true, he began, that the city comes before the Mayor— Thou hast said it, Tadhg, the city comes before the Mayor; I would not waste an hour sitting within doors taking instructions from Nottingham but would see the city under the evening light, wherefore we'll ride through the western and out by the eastern gate. If your honour would go to the Mayor with an easier mind after having seen *The White Cloud*— The way to the ships? Ulick cried to the soldier on guard. The ships, he answered, are moored in the deep channel off Lazar's Hill or in Salmon Pool beyond Irish Town. He continued to direct them, mentioning the many places they would pass by on their way thither —names unknown to Ulick and Tadhg, who whilst trying

to keep in mind the various turnings they were to take, reined in from time to time to admire the buildings and to ask their names. The like of which they had never seen before was the City Hall, and they stopped agape at the strength of Bermingham's Tower. On passing through Dames Gate they were at All Hallows Priory. We must keep to the north of the Priory, said Ulick; the soldier spoke of a marsh— And of a short cut through the marsh, Tadhg interjected, which we should find as dry as a bone at this season of the year. Yes; and of the archery butts in Hoggen Green, saying that we should keep to the left of St. Patrick's Well so as to be out of the line of chance arrows, the archers being but apprentices. Now will your honour look round, for 'tis a grand evening we have brought to Dublin, one that couldn't be bettered for seeing the city; and since it was the Danes that built her, Brian Boru might have stayed his hand, for wouldn't the Danes have been a great help to us in keeping out the English. There was once a great Danish Empire, said Ulick, including England and Scotland as well as Ireland. All past and gone, Tadhg answered, and they turned their horses' heads to the marsh.

After riding for a quarter of a mile through dying reeds, rushes, and tussocked grass, they came to some firm grassy slopes. Lazar's Hill, said Ulick. Now, isn't it wonderful that your honour should know it, never having laid eyes on it before. I have heard my mother speak of Félicien Aubes, a great gittern player who came from France to Galway with gleemen and gleemaidens. He died in that hospital. But open thine eyes, Tadhg, and admire the river, the bay and its shipping, with the very ship that I would like to take me to London yonder riding the tide—that one with the high forecastle and higher poop. Maybe she is *The White Cloud* herself, Tadhg answered, and we might do worse than ask about

her from one of the fishers beyond. And Ulick having no fault to find with Tadhg this time for his opinions, rode towards a little group of shielings put together out of the broken timbers of boats and ships. True dwellings of fishers, he said on catching sight of long nets drying in the sun, lobster pots woven out of osiers, seines, fishing rods and lines. Hast heard of a ship known as *The White Cloud*? he cried to a man mending an old cobble drawn up on the beach. Heard of her? said the man. Aren't we both looking at her! And her captain? Ulick inquired. Her captain was about a few minutes ago. Tadhg gave two shouts without getting an answer, but the third shout brought to them a florid-complexioned man, with clear blue eyes (a Norman Ulick recognised him to be even before he spoke). And guessing the two horsemen to be his passengers, the Earl's son and his harper, the captain of *The White Cloud* said: We have been expecting you, sir, for the last few days, and would like to loose, if it be to your convenience, to-morrow at daybreak. We came into Dublin less than an hour ago, Ulick answered, and I have business at the castle with his Worship, the Mayor. Maybe I should have done my business first, but I could not put *The White Cloud* out of my mind. Well, there she is, sir, a fine, taut ship that with a fair wind will take us to the Thames in ten days, if you could come on board to-night. My business will detain me in Dublin some days— A pity, indeed, for I have in mind the storms that tear up the sea late in September and early in October. What did the pigherd tell us, master? and it's they that know it; for being out with the pigs from daylight to dark, they are as quick as the wild geese themselves in scenting out a storm. A storm is making ready in the north or in the north-east for certain, the captain continued, so I would be on the other side before it breaks. We, too, would be on the other side, Ulick answered; but my father's orders to me

were not to leave Dublin without paying my respects to the Mayor. We have been detained already too long, the captain muttered, and Ulick stood watching the coming storm, unable to decide whether to go or to stay. At last, yielding to his inclination, he went on board and turned into his berth, and it seemed to him that he had not been long asleep when he was awakened by the plunging of the ship from billow to billow. He cried aloud, for he was unable to collect his thoughts, and would have rushed headlong through the door of the poop, leaving it open, mayhap, if Tadhg's voice had not stopped him. Where are we? he asked Tadhg. On board *The White Cloud,* your honour, and in the midst of a storm. So we have run into the storm, Ulick replied, and coming out of the poop they caught a rope that was thrown to them, and belayed themselves to the bulwarks. By the light of two horn lanterns hung high on the masts they distinguished the sailors at work on the yards, taking the captain's order roared to them from the dark deck, and judged him to be standing by the steersman. At intervals they heard the words: Starboard! Port! and in a little while they began to understand that his skill was to dodge the waves, never allowing one to catch the ship on the quarter. Why doesn't the steersman look aft? said Tadhg, and Ulick answered: The steersman is a coward and dare not look behind him. A poor thing it is, your honour, to be out on a night like this and in doubt of one's own steersman! and quaking he listened to the wind preparing on the horizon for another onset; like a charge of cavalry, gathering strength as it came, it fell upon the ship, stopping her in her course, stunning her. There is not a dry rag on board, said Tadhg. Look ahead, for God's sake, captain! Another big fellow is coming, he added under his breath. Port! cried the captain, and the wave carried *The White Cloud* over the crest into the hollow, the sail

on her foremast helping her to climb out of it. And hour after hour went by, with the same dangers, the same escapes, till the thought came to them that the speed of the wind was increasing and would carry them beyond England into the Atlantic.

For that or some other reason they heard the captain cry: We are running too fast; take in another reef! But his voice not seeming to reach them aloft, he moved a couple of steps nearer to make himself heard, and in that moment the mischief was done; for the steersman let the ship swing a little sideways and over her came a great wash of water, carrying away a great part of the poop, and breaking the mainmast. In the darkness and disorder of the deck it was hard to find the captain. Ulick and Tadhg deemed him dead, killed by the wave that had killed the steersman, but this was not so; he had saved himself somehow, and starting to his feet he rushed back to the helm, crying to the crew to cut away the raffle and free the ship from the dangers of a broken mast, whereupon it seemed to Ulick and Tadhg that they must untie themselves and work with the others. But they were bidden back to their corner by the captain. Get some sail on the foremast, he cried, and the crew falling to his intention to bring the ship up to the wind, worked amain, getting at last a new sail ready to go up to their mates on the yards. But the ship, being down in the trough of the sea, got little help from the sail and it was not till eight oars were thrust through the rowports that *The White Cloud* came round. All night the waves crashed against the bows. A good sign, betokening strength of thews and sinews of the rowers, said the captain. If they can hold out till dawn the sea may not get us. You hope for a lull in the wind at dawn? Ulick asked, and the captain answered: Maybe we shall get one if we are off the coast. The lash of the captain's whip went out, and the rower caught strength from it and rowed through the

night without feeling the weight of his oar, like one in a dream, till a bleak morning broke through grey scudding clouds. By noon the wind blew from the south-east. Two men fell over their oar; the lash went out again, but it could not rouse them. The feel of the deck tells me . . . Ulick and Tadhg heard the captain say as he disappeared under the hatchway, and when he reappeared again they heard what might well be the end of their lives: Her foremast is rocking in its socket, straining open the strakes, and the sail must be got down or she'll split beneath us. But if we get the sail off her she will steer no longer, and she steers hardly at all with the sail set. Art afraid, Tadhg? I quake, master, for the sea is cold and salt is bitter in the mouth—an awful death! A voice cried: Land ho! and the beetling cliff of Dunmore rose out of the mist. The cliffs of Dunmore! said the captain. But she is leaking like a basket. The pumps would keep her afloat for another few miles if my men were not weary. We have done no work, said Ulick; myself and my harper can pump. Then bend to the pumps, Ulick de Burgo, you and your harper.

The White Cloud dragged herself round the hook of land into the great estuary nearly a mile wide, where she would have split under them if boats had not come to her help and towed her to the wharf. The hulk is saved, said the captain. We are here for many a month, he added, addressing the peasants. There are many good adzemen and smiths among you? To which the peasants answered: The best in Ireland; none better, though you walk the world over! We shall be detained three months in this village! Ulick muttered, and in doubt whether to seek in Waterford a messenger to take a letter to his father, or to wait in Dunmore till some other ship was driven by a gale to find shelter in the river Suir—one that had lost no more than a sail or some rigging and would be ready to proceed on her voyage to the Thames

in a week or ten days, in less, perhaps, he asked the villagers who accompanied him to the inn if many ships put into Dunmore during the winter, and learnt from them that a big wind seldom failed to bring in a ship or two. The seasons are never alike, they said. In one season there is plenty of wind, in another the wind doesn't signify. And here we are for three months, Ulick said, turning from the villagers to Tadhg, with nothing to do but to visit the workshop every morning to survey and question the progress that is being made in repairing *The White Cloud,* and to climb the peak every afternoon to watch for a sail; and he cursed the captain for failing to foresee that the storm would break on the very night of their departure from Dublin. Three months will not be long passing, your honour. Tadhg's optimism angered Ulick, and he answered: I would as lief be told that we were here for three years, or for thirty! Tadhg did not understand, and Ulick did not tell his servant that even in his happiest moods he never could rid himself of the belief that he would die in poverty and obscurity in some desolate place; and this inveterate belief was closer to his heart than before as he and Tadhg toiled through the wet woods to the cliffs, his despair revealing itself very often in a single sentence, as when he said whilst disentangling himself from a thorn bush:

The wettest village in all Ireland! And the thorniest, Tadhg answered, thinking of the rent in the hosen. Sometimes a ray encouraged Ulick to hope for a fine evening, but the sky darkened and a gust carried the rain up the valley, drenching it from end to end. That last downpour should keep him from the hill, Tadhg said to himself, and taking down their harps from the wall he asked Ulick if it would not be better to cheer the workshop with music than to climb the hill again. But Ulick could not be dissuaded from the hill, and once more they climbed, and once more, seated in a cleft well sheltered

from the wind, he waited, certain that a ship would appear, whilst Tadhg crouched under a rock out of the rain like a rabbit.

Whilst watching a flock of golden clouds driven southwards, Ulick said: I know nothing more beautiful than golden clouds sailing over blue, yet a sail would gladden my eyes more than any array of colours. And these words bringing a small hope to Tadhg that his honour was weary of daily journeys to a hilltop where the winds were so high that the gulls perched hungry on the rocks below rather than take the air, he said: The gulls cannot know of any rocks but these, else they would have gone long ago. Ulick asked Tadhg what sign he had had that the gulls were weary of the rocks of Dunmore, and Tadhg answered that the time was not for fishing, nor for sailing either. Which means, Ulick snapped, that in thy mind we are befooled every day, and that it was no accident that drove *The White Cloud* into Dunmore a wreck. The Lord's breath lifts the fluffs of thistledown and tears the sail, Tadhg answered, hoping to propitiate, but his words not seeming to reach Ulick's ears, he began to wonder if his honour was thinking that some devil had raised the wind that had driven them into Dunmore, never to set forth again till the Judgment. A sail! cried Ulick, and starting to his feet he was caught by a sudden gust, and would have been carried over the cliff's edge of a certainty if Tadhg had not been by to clutch his belt. Ulick was saved, but his cap flew away over the rocks, startling the gulls from their roosts. Our best peaked cap gone! said Tadhg. Now what cap will your honour appear in when you are summoned to the Tower for knighthood? We doff our caps before we go into the King's presence, Tadhg. But he who is called upon to doff a cap must have a cap to doff, Tadhg answered, and together they descended the hillside, Ulick talking all the time of the building of a great beacon on the top of the rocks, or the building of

a belfry and the hanging of a loud-tongued bell in it that would warn the sailors from afar. Tadhg listened to Ulick's plans for the saving of lives whilst thinking how he would do his best on arriving in London to persuade his honour to lose no time in possessing himself of a new tunic, for there was no saying when the King would not send for him; most likely he would send a messenger off at once after reading the Earl's letter. But there will be no London, only four boards for him if he continues to go up this hill in search of ships. It was by this very pool that he started sneezing last week, and every day since the rheum has been sinking deeper into him— Dost hear what I'm saying, Tadhg? Yes, your honour, I hear you—you would speak with the captain about the beacon and the bell. Dost think we shall find him in the workshops on our way to the inn? Of that I know no more than yourself, but to-morrow morning will be time enough to speak to him of the bell and the beacon.

As if he had not heard him Ulick turned in the direction of the workshops, bent on finding the captain that evening, and failing to get any news more precise than that the captain had spoken of going to Waterford, he rambled up and down the village, asking everybody he met if he or she had seen the captain of *The White Cloud*; and meeting with nobody who had seen him since noon, he ceased at last to doubt the say of the passers-by that the captain had gone to Waterford to buy the timber needed for the ship's mast. He spoke to me yesterday about the ship's mast, said Tadhg, and your honour would do well to come into the inn and let me pull the wet hose off your legs. When his hose and his tunic were taken from him he could not resist the warm shift that Tadhg offered, nor Tadhg's persuasion that he should take to his bed, wherein he did not cease to talk of the captain; and to pacify him Tadhg left him in charge of the servants at the inn and went out to meet the captain at

the bridgehead on his way back from Waterford. He will not lie down till he has seen you, he said to the captain when he came across the bridge, and whilst walking with him to the inn Tadhg told of the shivering fits. Keep a fire burning all night, and if he is not better in the morning we'll send to Waterford for a doctor, were the captain's last words. A doctor, said Tadhg, coming from the door— No doctor can help me, Ulick answered. You should be in the warm, in your bed, master, and not in the middle of the floor. The pain in my back and loins is too severe to be borne lying at length; and he remained out of his bed some time longer, straining over a chair back. Are they worse than before? Tadhg asked. Ulick answered that the pains were all he could bear, and Tadhg passed the night praying that he might be saved from appearing before the Earl with the sad tidings of his son's death. In the early morning somebody knocked. It is the captain, said Tadhg, and going to the door he whispered: He will not let me ride to Waterford for a doctor, and once he has said a thing he will not budge from it. I cannot hear the words you are speaking together, Ulick cried from his bed, but I know you to be talking of doctors and wise women. I shall see neither, but will lie up till I recover my health or lose it altogether. I must leave Dunmore if I am to get well. Come in, captain. The open door let a flood of spring sunlight into the room, and with it came the captain in high spirits, joyous as a boy, to tell that the timber for the new mast had turned out better than he expected. So everything has happened for the best, except . . . he paused a moment . . . except your honour's illness. Yes, except for my illness all would have gone well, Ulick answered; but I am better to-day than yesterday, and if I could leave Dunmore I would soon be myself again, of that I am certain. Whereupon the captain spoke of a house in Waterford standing in the

midst of a garden, with wooden staircases in it and glazed windows—the very house he would like to see his honour lodged in, till Ulick bounced to his feet and called to Tadhg to order a pair of saddle-horses to be brought round.

Now, what sort of horses are being saddled, he asked when Tadhg returned, and Tadhg answered that there were but two in the stables, a restive mare and a quiet cob. The cob will carry you quietly and safely— I will ride the restive mare! said Ulick, and he sprang into the saddle, to bestride a lengthy, ragged animal that tossed her head, pulling hard, flouncing from a fast trot into a boisterous canter whenever she got the chance. But Ulick held her so well together that Tadhg began to wonder if his honour was the sick man he had complained himself to be overnight. All the same, I will choose the grass to ride over, for the cob's hooves set the mare dancing, and she'll tire the master in the end; and no more than half the journey was over when Ulick drew rein, and turning in the saddle begged Tadhg to believe that he had suffered no pain at all since he had put his foot in the stirrup. Tadhg agreed that his honour's sudden recovery was not less than a miracle; and he was not dismayed next morning by the news that his honour had suffered a good deal of pain during the night, but had kept to his bed through it all. I knew that I would begin to get better when I left Dunmore, and I prophesy that I shall be ready to step on board at the end of the month. But we cannot go on board *The White Cloud,* Tadhg answered, till your honour has written to the Earl to tell him how we escaped drowning off Dunmore. True for thee, Tadhg; let me have writing materials. But when they were brought to him the pen dropped from his hand, and he wandered to the window saying he could not collect his thoughts and that his sickness was upon him again.

At the window there was the sky to be seen, with white clouds moving over, and comely poplars, too, at the end of the garden; and behind the poplars there was an orchard descending, so Tadhg told him, to the river bank. Just as the orchard does in Ballinrobe, he answered. Tadhg would have had him tell of Ballinrobe and his mother, whom he knew his honour loved with a sort of idolatry, and of his father, whom he worshipped, but Ulick was too languid for speech, and even for thinking; he could only enjoy the sunlight in the garden and the south wind bringing to him the fragrance of the earth, now tremulous in the agitations of a new birth. He sought for the scent of flowers in the wind, but there was none; he dreamed as he dozed of snowdrop and crocus; and the day passed, and every day he strove to write his letter; but he could only dream; it vanished on his way to the table, and he asked Tadhg if he would ever be able to command his thoughts again. I am not myself; I am like an animal, only able to receive sensations of earth and sky. Tadhg did not answer; he retired to shed a few tears; and when all signs of these were gone he returned with a brave face and cheering words, and when his honour's face was turned away his eyes searched the writing table for the beginning of a letter. But several days had to pass before the letter began to be written. Why, master, you have written half a page! Yes, Tadhg; my head is all right now. Get thee away into the town to seek a messenger. The letter will be finished ere thou hast found one. Remember, Tadhg, we have been five months here. More than that, said Tadhg, a little more, and we shall need money in London; nearly all we took with us is spent. We shall find money waiting for us in London, Ulick answered, and he took down his harp, which he had not touched since his sickness.

CHAP. XLV.

THE WHITE CLOUD lay along the wharf spruce and taut in her new apparel of sails and rigging, and on stepping on board Ulick de Burgo said to the captain and Tadhg together: In the high wood up yonder the rooks are hatching, and if there be a rookery along the banks of the Thames— There is a rookery, the captain replied, at Greenwich. But we shall not land at Greenwich; we shall sail some few miles up the Thames to the Tower; and leaving his passengers he gave orders for *The White Cloud* to be rowed into the sea, for the wind was faint under the hill. There'll be wind enough outside, the captain cried back, and Ulick's eyes followed the sunlight wandering in and out of the woods, lighting up the banks, bringing the rushes into flower and colour to the country and the sea. A month, he said, often spoken of as boisterous and burly, but this year gentle as a child; and spying some daffodils along the bank, he added: I was born in March, and when the news of my coming reached my father's castle he left Galway in his barge, thinking of my mother and of me; but when he reached the house he did not rush in to see us, and never was able to explain how he had been led first into the garden and through the garden into the orchard, out of the orchard into the shaw over against the little river Robe, where he gathered some early daffodils, brought them into the house and laid them in my cradle. . . . Now, Tadhg, in a few minutes more we shall be in the sea, with the big hill and cliffs fading out of our sight; so look whilst there's time, and beg thine eyes to remember things thou'lt never see again. I have no wish to see the hill of Dunmore or those cliffs again, nor to remember them. That hill heartened us whilst at the pumps, Tadhg.

Dunmore had succoured them in their need and indifference to their deliverer was not to his liking. He even

regretted leaving the village, though he hoped never to return to it, and to escape from Tadhg's comments he allowed his thoughts to rove among the billows, crashing as they tumbled upwards amid the rocks. And then his eyes delighted in the divers colours of the sea, heaving with feline voluptuousness under a sky densely clouded, with only here and there a hint of the blue beyond the clouds. About the ship gulls snatched their prey from the surface and cormorants pursued theirs into the depths of the sea, and through the gulls and the cormorants *The White Cloud,* herself like a great bird, went tilting over the happy waves. And the wind blowing steadily from the north-west carried them towards the English coast, all of them remembering that it was a north-east wind that had nearly brought them to their doom some five months before, and all of them glad when midnight was past and the sun rose again, for it was at midnight that the wind had raised great waves against *The White Cloud.* A tigress, hungry for their lives, the sea was that night, but now she was pretty as a kitten at play in the sun; and all the crew wondered how such a beautiful weather should continue so long and serve them so well, for a fair wind blew day after day, bringing *The White Cloud* into the Thames estuary on the tenth day. When the Greenwich rookery came into sight Ulick remembered the one above Dunmore, and he asked Tadhg if he had forgotten the words he had spoken to him as they sailed out of the harbour. Did I not say that the young birds would be out of their shells when we arrived in London? You did, faith, and if we were under yon trees we should hear the broods squeaking for the food the parent birds cannot gather quickly enough. And that if we were not delayed more than a month in London, Tadhg, we should see the young birds out on the branches as we rode to Southampton—a prediction that came true, for they were not many miles from Southampton when Ulick turned in

his saddle, saying: Tadhg, dost remember what I said to thee as we sailed up the Thames? About the rooks that would be out on the branches in a few weeks, Sir Ulick? And it being the first time that Tadhg had addressed his honour by his new title, Ulick was swept back into the moment when the King, after reading the Earl's letter, drew his sword, saying: Kneel, sir, and then slapping him on the shoulder, added: Rise, Sir Ulick! and so deep was he in his recollections of the royal gest that Tadhg drew bridle and dropped some paces to the rear. But Ulick needed a confidant; Tadhg was called to the saddle-bow again, and for several miles they talked of Edward II., who would have detained Ulick in London if he had not pleaded that he was on his way to France and would like to be in Normandy in the month of May, when the trouvères rode out of their castles accompanied by their gleemen. So the son of my friend and vassal, Earl de Burgo, would win for himself a fame equal to Adam de la Halle and Jean Bretel. There have been no troubadours for the last thirty years; you were born too late. To soothe the lad, whose face told his disappointment, the King added: But the love of song has not gone with the trouvères; and when Ulick had sung in French and in Irish, Edward asked him to tell the progress the Normans were making in the subjugation of the country. The east has been settled, sir, to the banks of the Shannon, but there are turbulent chiefs. Of the Irish chieftains I have no fear, much more of the Scots, for my news is that the Bruces would leave their barren lands and seize the fertile soil of Ireland. Let your Majesty put such evil thoughts behind you, Ulick answered, and a cloud came into the King's face, for it was not yet a year since a great English army was defeated at Bannockburn. . . .

But the King could not speak of Bannockburn, Ulick said to himself, and his thoughts passing on to other

things, he remembered what Edward had said about the preparation of an army in the north for the invasion of Ireland. The fruits of Bannockburn! he said, reining in his horse to inquire from a party of travellers coming from Southampton if the ship that carried them had returned to Honfleur or was still lying in Southampton water. Prick on, said the travellers, for she looses to-morrow morning, and their horses being fresh, the last twenty miles were ridden at speed. In the commotion of getting on board the thought of an army assembling in Scotland for the invasion of Ireland was laid aside; such news cannot be forgotten though it may be laid aside by the young, and nobody was younger than Sir Ulick de Burgo in his twenty-fifth year when he sailed from Southampton with his gleeman, Tadhg O'Dorachy.

A fair wind is blowing; we shall be in France in a few days, and these should be devoted to the composition of songs, for we shall begin singing at once, Tadhg. Now, tell me, what were the Earl's last instructions? We are to ride from Honfleur to Courancy— My mother's village! Ulick said. And then from this to that castle, presenting to the lords and ladies the letters of introduction he has given into my keeping. Tadhg drew a list from his tunic and tried to engage his master's attention. Courancy, said Ulick, is within view of the Seine, and we shall ride under poplar trees whose foliage sweeps gay skies of blue and white clouds; and I have a feeling that it will be under one of those poplar avenues that we shall meet a trouvère riding to a castle whose parapets will show out of a beautifully planted hillside far away. But did not the King tell your honour that the last trouvère was one Adam de la Halle, who died at Arras about thirty years ago. A trouvère that lived and sang no more than thirty years ago must have left a follower; and we shall find him, for hast not heard that there's always a last rabbit in the burrow? And though the

great trouvères of Arras are dead, Tadhg O'Dorachy lives to make the Irish harp known in France. The Irish harp will make friends wherever it goes, your honour; but I'd like the letters we have brought with us— We cannot stop at castle gates to read letters, Tadhg. I shall sound my horn, and the gates will be opened to us by joyous valets. And they had not to follow the winding Seine for many miles before this prophecy came true. It was seldom that they were bidden away by a gatekeeper, and directed by peasants, who left their work in the fields and came down to the hedges to tell them of marriages, baptisms and dances, they rode from castle to castle through the months of June, July, August, and September, till one day in a drizzle of October rain they came upon a long cavalcade wending its way to Paris.

In Paris they found a quiet lodging and spent the mornings composing new songs, and in the afternoons Ulick sang to the lute in salons where all the fashion collected; and leaving Paris when the leaves were green again, they visited all their old friends and made many new ones. A child's holiday their French adventure would have been were it not for rumours that the Bruces were winning battles, and though Ulick often asked Tadhg if he believed these rumours, Tadhg could only answer that if the Bruces were getting the upper hand the Earl would have written recalling them to Ireland. We have not been to Courancy for six months, and a letter may be waiting for us now, Ulick said. But no letter was there. It is strange that the Earl does not even send a message, Tadhg; and the twain rode away, Ulick deep in perplexity, certain that every Norman should return to put the Scots out of Ireland, but dissuaded easily from a return thither by the sight of a castle. We have never sung at that castle, Tadhg, and I have a thought that we shall be well received. As well received at the castle beyond as at the next one, no better

and no worse, Tadhg answered. A lady may be embroidering in this one and not in the next, Ulick replied. In this hope he blew his horn; the gates were opened and the Bruces forgotten for a month or for three; and in such variety of entertainment the seasons wore away, till one day in the summer of 1318—it must have been in June, for they always remembered it as a day that still retained something of spring-like freshness in the skies and in the trees—they turned their horses' heads once more towards Courancy and Ulick broke silence with the words: Of what art thou thinking, Tadhg? And without waiting for Tadhg's answer, he continued: I am asking myself if it is a wholesome destiny for a man to ride always to castles singing songs. We all fall homesick now and again, your honour. Homesick, Tadhg! With thee it may be homesickness. Tadhg waited for him to say more, but Ulick seemed to be away. At last he said: There are in life diversions; and seemingly on second thoughts he added: And there are preparations. But how may we distinguish between diversion and preparation? And how may it be in the fair order of things that a father should let years go by without sending his son a letter? How many times have we left Courancy downhearted, Tadhg? And leaving Tadhg to his thoughts, Ulick continued: The rumours are persistent that the Bruces are getting the upper hand in Ireland—I wouldn't go so far as that, Tadhg interjected; the last rumour was that the Earl was back again on his throne. Ulick did not answer, and the horses fell from a trot into a walk. Dost remember Roudier, Tadhg? I remember him well, your honour. But as if he had not heard Tadhg's words, Ulick said: We may well meet him to-morrow in Courancy. Tadhg did not dare to put questions, and their ride ended in silence. He is angry with me! Tadhg said to himself; and next day, during the long ride of some thirty miles, Ulick spoke but few

words, and Tadhg grieved, till he saw his master swing himself out of the saddle and ask the taverner if anybody had inquired for him yesterday or to-day. Three days ago a man inquired after Sir Ulick de Burgo, the taverner answered. Ulick entered the inn, and Roudier rose to meet him.

So thou hast returned at last from Ireland, Philippe Roudier! having exceeded by many months the time allowed to thee to make my father's portrait. Has the Comtesse complained, sir, that I was about it too long? for if she have, she'll forget to blame me in her pleasure, finding in my drawing a likeness that all have admired. Look into it, sir. I'll look into the portrait and praise it when I have heard thy news, Roudier. My father—where is he? In one of his many castles, sir, in which I cannot tell; he has so many; and his wanderings from one to the other have gained for him the nickname of the Wandering Earl. Tidings of his defeat at Connor cannot have failed to reach you, sir? Rumours have reached me of reverses, Roudier, but each rumour is contradicted by the next, and I know not what to think. In his pride your father would not accept help from Sir Edmund Butler. Help, he said, to drive a few Scots into the sea! a thing he would have done if the crafty Bruce had not contrived to alienate his ally, Felim O'Conor. Betrayed by Felim! Ulick cried. Art sure that thy story is a true one, Roudier? And Roudier answered: Bruce's spies came to Felim with tales that all the Irish were flocking to the Scotsmen's standard, and Felim, though brave, being always mistrustful of his own shadow, as the saying is, dreamed that his sovereignty in Sligo was threatened, and took his leave of the Earl. Whereupon Bruce turned, and at Connor a battle was fought in which the Earl's army was put to flight. Thousands died on the field of battle, and thousands more were overtaken in their flight and killed; and among the

prisoners was William, cousin to the Red Earl, who was held to ransom— To a great ransom, no doubt, said Ulick, one that will help to complete the conquest of Ireland. The conquest of Ireland is not yet, Roudier answered. Edward Bruce was crowned King of Ireland at Carrickfergus— Yet thou sayest that the conquest of Ireland is not yet complete! Edward Bruce having defeated the Normans everywhere, Roudier continued, Felim O'Conor fell to thinking that he, too, was a great commander, and assembling an army of ten thousand men, marched through Mayo into Galway, where he was met at Athenry by a great army under the command of Richard Bermingham— And was defeated? Ulick cried. Killed on the battlefield, Roudier answered, the battle of Athenry restoring the authority of your father, sir.

Ulick called for Tadhg, and before Tadhg had passed the threshold he said: We start for Ireland to-morrow; and if no ship sails to-morrow, then on the next day or the next—by the first ship that looses for Southampton or Galway. Ireland, Tadhg, is in the power of the Bruces, who are everywhere, spreading ruin, killing and burning and destroying. But, master— Ask no questions, Tadhg; come back from Honfleur with news of the ship. We shall have time for talk during the voyage. . . . There is much more to tell, Roudier said, but you can inquire it all out on board the ship you sail in. I can but repeat gossip. I beg you to calm yourself, sir, for I have here your father's portrait— I have no eyes for portraits, Roudier. Sir, your father's portrait! True: my thoughts are astray; and after taking the portrait and looking at it, Ulick said: With my father's portrait thou hast passed over another. The portrait you are looking at, sir, is of King O'Melaghlin's youngest daughter, a nun. I thought there were no more kings in Ireland, Roudier. Chieftains or kings, which ever it may please you to call them, Roudier answered; and

seeing that Sir Ulick's thoughts were distracted from Ireland for the moment, he said:

I drew portraits of Sir John Bermingham, Sir Richard Bermingham, and Sir Edmund Butler, and was kept busy drawing portraits of the noble and mighty till one day, at the end of a long talk with the Earl about you, sir, he said: The fame of thy portraits has reached far into Ireland, even to Lough Ennel, the partial kingdom of King O'Melaghlin (we allow him the title out of courtesy, for he favours our cause). He writes asking me to send to him the Comtesse d'Artois' craftsman, for he would have portraits of himself and of his daughters, three beautiful girls often spoken of as the Three Celtic Graces. I answered your father, sir, that I had been in Ireland longer than the holiday the Comtesse d'Artois had granted me, and that my thoughts were on the decoration of the horse-litter I had left unfinished and on the cage I was making for her parrot. The same Comtesse that I knew thirty years ago, said the Earl, intent on acquisitions: tapestries, embroideries, ivories, psalters, reliquaries. Is Hesdin still full of these? Fuller than ever, I replied, adding that you were often at Hesdin, sir, at which he seemed pleased. I would that my boon to King O'Melaghlin should detach him finally from the mere Irish, the Earl continued; and I went to Lough Ennel under escort. At every stage of the journey horses awaited us, a journey of three days; and at the end of the journey I received a welcome greater than I had expected from the King. Almost a familiar welcome it was; the Irish are a courteous nation, from king to shepherd, and O'Melaghlin was flattered that Earl de Burgo had granted his request.

My first portrait was of the King himself, and I had little trouble with it, for he never asked to see my drawing, and on the third day was still sitting like a statue when the Princesses Liadin and Muirgil came in, two

beautiful girls who spoke in Irish to their father, translating what they had said into Latin afterwards so that I might understand them, saying that the water in a well could not give back a truer image of their father. Clapping their hands they withdrew, smiling to reward me for my work. I hope my drawing of your daughters will please you, sir, I said, as well as my drawing of you seems to please them. Two beautiful girls will make a more attractive picture than one old man, he answered, and to turn his thoughts from a mournful subject, I continued: Earl de Burgo spoke of a third daughter, and three would make a happier picture than two. A happier picture, the King muttered, but for whom? And afraid that this third daughter might have died lately, I said no more. But the desire of speech was upon the King, and he continued: My youngest daughter has turned from the paths of this world into the path that leads heavenward. A great blow this was to me, Philippe Roudier, for the flesh is weak. I loved my daughter Soracha better, perhaps, than Liadin and Muirgil, and it may be for that weakness God in his wisdom chose to take her from me. But though my daughter is taken from me, my confessor will not deem it a sin if I tell him that I would have a portrait of her.

The convent of Durrow is but seven miles from Lough Ennel, and I went thither bearing a letter from King O'Melaghlin to the Abbess, who entertained me with pleasant talk about your father and Ireland till our converse grew wearisome. Perhaps you would like to see Sister Soracha? she said. I answered that I would, and she returned bringing with her the Princess. And we sat talking about the King and her sisters till at last taking courage I began: Princess— Sister Soracha, please, she interjected. Shall I begin your portrait to-day, I continued, or shall we leave it over until to-morrow? Why not begin at once? the Abbess asked, and

I answered: I am ready. But I did not draw Sister Soracha's portrait easily; I tore up two drawings; and one day she said: The French come to Ireland to help the Normans. Who have, I replied, become Irish. They come hither to rob our country, she continued, and to do this they have to oppress, and Ireland will never be at peace again. Tears rose to her eyes, which I feigned not to see, and to distract her thoughts, I said: I came from France to draw a portrait of Earl de Burgo for his son, Sir Ulick de Burgo, a trouvère. I thought there were no more trouvères, she replied. So you have heard here in Ireland of our trouvères and troubadours, I asked. Their impieties and wanton lives, she answered, have been reported. Reports, I said, which have no doubt contained some grain of truth, but no more. A grain of wheat in a bushel of chaff, she answered smiling, and seeing that for a nun her mind was freer from conventional beliefs than I had supposed it to be, I continued: Yes, Sir Ulick is a trouvère, the last of them. We spoke of the great trouvères of the twelfth century, and I sang some of their songs to her. Why do you not sing to me some of Sir Ulick de Burgo's songs? she asked. I sang snatches from your songs, sir, all I could remember, and even in my poor singing they seemed admirable, superior in many little ways to the songs of Thibaut de Champagne and Colin Muset, and she asked me if I could make a drawing of you from memory. I said I could put some lines upon paper, and after looking at the drawing I had done of you, she left me to continue my altar-piece (the crowning of the Virgin in heaven by her son, with all the saints about them), the nuns coming and going; and when I had drawn them all, the Princess Soracha returned, and we spent some more time talking of you.

I would have you make a portrait of me to take to Sir Ulick de Burgo, she said. Will you do one for him?

And when the sitting was over, and she came round to see what I had done, she asked me if Sir Ulick would see her with my eyes or quite differently. I am a nun, she said, and men do not consider nuns as they do other women—or rarely, she added after a pause. I asked her why she had taken the veil, and she answered that when she was nearly eighteen she could think only of Jesus, but she had resisted the craving for her father's sake till her eighteenth birthday. He is a pious man, she said, and would have God's will on earth as it is in heaven, however great the pain may be. My father loves me dearly, above the love that he gives to my sisters—so I have been led to think. And when I asked her if she were happy in the convent, she answered: Jesus was nearer to me before I came hither, and sometimes it seems to me that I love him no longer. As she spoke these words her face and voice told me that the stories I had related of you, sir, and your picture, were as sparks fallen on tinder, and I watched her, wondering, for she seemed to have been absent from herself for a very long while. The woman is never the same as the girl, she said, breaking into speech suddenly. We make promises that we cannot fulfil, or fulfil indifferently. And until the woman within her dies, every nun dreams of being carried away. She knows that she will be buried in her habit, but she puts a taper in her window and lies down watching it, uncertain whether she would follow the knight if he came, only certain that she is guilty of a sin in putting the light there, though it lure nobody. She falls asleep watching the taper, and finds the charred wick in the morning. So her life goes by. Shall I tell all you have told me, Princess Soracha, to Sir Ulick de Burgo? I asked. Tell him what you please, she answered. Yes, tell him that I burn tapers in my window, knowing well that no knight will climb the pear tree that grows beneath. . . .

You do not think, sir, that I came here with the fable of a discontented nun to amuse a man distracted by news of his country's disasters? No, Roudier; the story of thy nun is true enough; I doubt it not. And the drawing thou hast made of her is beautiful; I have wits about me to see that, but no more. I return the drawing—— But your father's portrait? Ah, I had forgotten it! And Soracha's portrait—will you not keep it, sir? Yes, in remembrance of thee, Roudier. And now we part. The Comtesse d'Artois was a friend of my father, and thy portrait of the Earl, as thou hast said, will help her to forget the long delay. Tell her that when the wars are over I will return, perhaps bringing my father with me; tell her all that. I cannot speak or listen any more, but must think of our departure. Tadhg is in Honfleur asking if a ship sails. A merchant ship will loose, Roudier cried, turning in his saddle. Ulick waved his hand, and unable to bear the strain of waiting for Tadhg any longer, he set forth to meet him. And meeting him half-way between Honfleur and Courancy, he cried: Jump from thy horse at once, for it is not easy to hear in this wind, and thou hast seemingly a long tale to tell.

The White Cloud, your honour, is in harbour for repairs, and a lot of barnacles will have to come off her bottom before she is again ready for sea. Wait two months in Honfleur whilst the Bruces win battles in Ireland! Many battles may be won in two months. I am thinking, Tadhg, of some merchant ship trading between the two ports. The old *Phoenix,* your honour, will loose at the end of the week for Galway. Then return thou to Courancy, Tadhg, and for thy horse and mine take whatever price may be offered thee (remember that thou proclaim them to be Irish), and to-morrow thou'lt come on board. Remember, too, that after the first day at sea thy business will be to bring back to me all the news of the Bruces thou canst gather from the sailors. But as

soon as the news goes round that Sir Ulick de Burgo is on board, your honour, the sailors will be as dumb as the stones! A simpleton indeed I should be, Ulick answered, if I had not thought of the need of a different name. Jules Chastel will come well to the captain's ears. Now away with thee to Courancy, as fast as thy horse can trot. He helped the little man on to his horse, and continued his journey to Honfleur brooding the excellence of his plan. But a plan that cannot be put into practice is never a good one, and they were not many days at sea when Tadhg, eager to hear whether success was going to the Norman-Irish or to the Scotch invaders, began to put questions to the sailors, distracting their attention from their work. A crack from the captain's whip advised him to desist, but he would not be gainsaid, and one day when he stopped a man who had been ordered aloft by the captain to take in sail, the whip whirled and fell across his shoulders and he was bidden to return to his master with the news that the crew did not come on board to talk about the Bruces—news that Tadhg did not care to pass on to Sir Ulick lest it might raise up a quarrel between him and the captain. One blow more or less in a world where there was little else than blows for the mere Irish mattered little. Moreover, the captain was in his right; he must rule his crew. So did Tadhg consider the blow he had received, and the captain, as he walked up and down the deck, half regretted that he had been so ready with his whip. But after all, a stripe is an Irishman's natural lot. And coming upon Ulick next morning staring across the sea, he was moved to pass the remark that they were journeying on a favourable wind and might be in Galway in three weeks.

Ulick, who had spoken to nobody but Tadhg for some days, answered the captain pleasantly, and henceforth whenever they met in the mornings on deck they dropped into talk; and it was from the captain that Ulick learnt

that after the battle of Connor Edward Bruce had won battle after battle, defeating Roger Mortimer at Kells, and the royal forces at Sketherys, near Ardscull. Ulick was eager to learn how these battles had been won, but he kept back the questions that rose to his lips lest he might betray himself, and lay awake all night thinking how in the morning he might coax the captain into telling what had happened to Edward Bruce after the defeat of the royal forces. But next day his curiosity was so great that he dared to penetrate into the captain's private room, and, undeterred by the fact that the captain sat with a chart before him, begged that he might be told if the Scots had taken Dublin or any important town. The captain answered that owing to the bravery of Nottingham the Mayor, in burning the suburbs, the Scots had been compelled to leave Dublin and to march on to Limerick, where the Mayor, taking example from Nottingham, burnt the suburbs of his city, and the Scotsmen were forced to retreat through the provinces they had laid waste, only a remnant reaching Ulster. And so ended the dream of the great Celtic empire, the captain added, hoping thereby to rid himself of his visitor. The great Celtic empire! he exclaimed, and the captain with a look of despair on his face told him that the intention of the Bruces was to unite all the Celtic races against the Saxon and the Norman. Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Cornwall—all would be ranged against Edward of England if the Bruces had brought battering-rams, catapults, and other engines of war to Dublin. And why did they not bring these engines? Ulick asked, and the captain answered that the Bruces counted on Earl de Burgo, who was in Dublin at the time, no doubt for the purpose of persuading the citizens to come to terms with the Scots. Remember, sir, that the Earl had married his daughter, Elizabeth, to Robert Bruce, and that his sister is the wife of James the Steward of Scotland. Incensed

though he was by these aspersions on his father's honour, Ulick had command enough over his temper to allow himself to retreat with dignity and to keep his own counsel for the rest of that day, arguing with himself from time to time that the captain had only told him the truth, things that he knew already: that his sister was Queen of Scotland and his aunt the wife of James the Steward of Scotland; and at the end of another day's sailing Ulick was tired of his own company, of Tadhg, and was drawing nigh to the belief that if he were Earl de Burgo instead of Earl de Burgo's bastard, he, too, might have gone to Dublin, if not to persuade the citizens to hand over the keys of the city to the enemy, at least to tell them the danger they were in. The Scots were successful everywhere, and Edward of England could give them no help, his armies being fully engaged in holding his own border. Yes, in the circumstance he might have acted just as his father had acted. A few days afterwards Ulick and the captain were again talking of the Bruces, and another fact transpired: that Edward Bruce had refused to take his brother's advice and return to Scotland with the remnant of his army, and was now in Ulster, preparing to descend in the autumn, when the country was full of food, upon Dublin, with the intention of laying siege to the city. If he took Dublin, or defeated the army that Sir John Bermingham would send out to dispute his passage, all the chieftains would rally to his side, and then indeed the dream of the great Celtic empire might come to pass.

All the captain said seemed to Ulick strangely clear; it was as if a light had been brought into a darkened room in which he had been wandering, seeking something, he knew not what. But now he knew why he was going to ask for an army to oppose Bruce's passage into southern Ireland; and till the end of the voyage he brooded the details of this campaign, suddenly revealed to him. But

when he arrived in Galway and rushed to the castle, his father in his long cloak lined with green silk standing by the window put out of his mind the words he had come to speak: Father, I am here to help thee in thy need, and instead he blurted out: Thou art the living image of Roudier's portrait! So thou didst recognise me in his picture? the Earl asked. I did indeed! And the men stood looking at each other, not daring to speak. Roudier bade thee to Ireland? the Earl said at last, and Ulick answered: No; I heard from him and from the captain of the ship I sailed in something of thy story, and I have come to ask thee for an army. Thou must go to Bermingham for an army, or for command in his army, and I doubt if he'll give thee one. It seemed to Ulick hard that he should be punished for his father's mistakes, but he put no wounding questions to the Earl, and telling him without more that he was going to see what Bermingham could do for him, he rode away, to meet a gentleman who talked French like himself and questioned him closely about the Normans in France, the rivalry between the French and the Normans, and the struggle that would soon begin between them, if it had not already begun. Ulick, who knew France only from the castle and from the roadside, could tell him little about the King of France, and pressed him to consider the Irish difficulty, the defeat of Bruce in the east and his own wish to take part in that battle. At these last words a light came into Bermingham's face, and he said: If you have come to Ireland, as I apprehend, sir, to assist the Normans, being a Norman yourself, you can do so by undertaking to defend Mayo against Sligo; and they spent the afternoon together, engaged in deep converse, Ulick learning that what the raiders needed to cease to be raiders was a town. They had tried to take Dublin and failed, and they had tried to take Limerick, and it might well be that, undeterred by their losses at Athenry, they might send an

expedition into Galway to seize the town. That they would not succeed in getting the town is certain, Bermingham said, but they would distract many from my army. I should have to garrison Galway heavily, and I need all my soldiers in the east of Ireland, for Robert, King of Scotland, will reinforce his brother's army.

Bermingham spoke so clearly and haughtily that Ulick was much impressed, and he went back to his father to tell him all he had heard and to ask him which castle he would give him. If thou hast not an army, father, thou hast a castle. And they spent the evening talking of Castle Carra, the Earl saying no word in disparagement of Bermingham lest he might inadvertently quench his son's ardour for battle, and he dropped into remembrances often of his campaigns in Scotland under the banner of the great king, Edward I of England.

CHAP. XLVI.

EVERY lake is a mystery, except the lakes that are merely expansions, overflowings of a great river, like the Shannon lakes, and whosoever is born in a lake district and has lived on lake shores never loses sight of lakes, however far he may wander from them; and Ulick had often wondered why it was that Lough Carra should suddenly leave its low wooded shores for Lough Mask, a dark pool overhung with mountain forests. From these mountain forests many rivers must flow into Lough Mask, but he knew none of these, only a river that dipped into a cavern to join Lough Corrib, four miles away. Lough Corrib flowed into a river, one that reached the sea, and on the hot breathless journey from Galway to Cong he asked himself if a certain affinity in waters enabled a river to cross a great lake without losing itself in the lake, to appear again and to go on again; and he thought of birds that are suddenly summoned to cross unknown

seas. Salmon came up into Lough Corrib, and he remembered how one day after many hours of vain fishing a fish had risen in the twilight to the fly. They would have remained out even longer in the hope of another rise, but his mother had asked that they might return to Cong, saying she was cold, and his father had bidden the oarsmen put their backs into the oars—a thing which the present oarsmen could not do, so stifling was the heat. Twenty oars dipped into the languid lake, and every hour the overseer dashed buckets of water over the crew lest he should have sunstroke amongst them. All prayed that the sun might sink behind the western mountains and a breeze come up. At last the breeze came, ruffling the lake, and the sails of the Earl's barge drew. If the breeze continues, said the captain, we shall be in Cong before night and you'll be able to get horses and a guide. All of which came true. Ulick, standing in the bow of the boat, cried: A guide to Castle Carra? and was answered by somebody that their horses had arrived the night before from Galway, and that Michael Quin would take them to Castle Carra without missing his way.

You'll be at the castle before midnight! Mike cried, putting his heels into his chestnut nag, leaving them to follow him, a thing which was not easy to do, for the evening had begun to darken and he rode zig-zagging. Sometimes they were in a bog, sometimes in a forest, and after passing through Ballinrobe they seemed to be riding always in sight of a lake. Lough Carra, your honour; and the green hill away above it goes by the name of Mucloon because of a herd of pigs that a ghost used to trot out of the forest, a ghost that would strangle any man or woman if they so much as looked back on the road from Carnacun to Ballinrobe, or from Ballinrobe to Carnacun. Soon we'll be taking the ford at the foot of Mucloon and you'll be lifting your legs, for the water will be up to your horses' girths; and keep your eyes all to

the right or the ghost will be on you—you won't be quit of him till you come to Carnacun. . . . They rode on for two miles more. You should be hearing a late cock or a too early one crowing as we go through Carnacun, and after that you may look to the right or the left, or wherever you like, for Carnacun is the mearing. Whose mearing? Ulick asked, and Tadhg answered: The ghost's, to be sure! And a little beyond Carnacun the boy said: Now we'll be coming to a bit of tough forest and you would do well to keep close to me, for if you lose the track I shall have a job to find you. We will not leave ten yards between us and thee, said Tadhg; and at the heels of the chestnut nag they rode through the darkness, expecting every moment the trees to divide on a background of grey lake. In answer to their questions Mike cried back: You won't see a sight of the lake again till we come to Castle Carra, so it's no good looking for it; keep your eyes on the tail of my nag.

The trees stopped suddenly and Lough Carra lay in front of them with its castle on their right, atop of a headland, only the keep showing, the parapeted walls and turrets and redoubts lost in mists and shadows. Mike asked whether his honour would be willing that he should run down to the moat with the password. Give thee the password, boy? But it isn't in your honour's mind that I'd be making a bad use of the password if I had it? Ulick did not answer, and whilst waiting for the drawbridge to be lowered he looked into the deep moat and admired the fastness of the twin turrets and their great arch, in which he thought he could espy a portcullis. Gustave Landrey, the captain of the guard, came through it, and after exchanging a few words with Ulick he ordered the drawbridge to be lowered. A dark ride through a wild country, he said; if we had had any warning of your honour's arrival to-night we should have been ready to receive you. Ulick signed to Tadhg

to join him. Here is Tadhg O'Dorachy, my harper; I must speak with him. Thou hast paid our guide? Tadhg answered that he had, and whilst the ostlers were leading the horses to their stables Landrey came forward with a lantern picked up in the guard-house and led them up a steep path through the garden that encircled the keep to some steps set sideways along the castle walls, so narrow that the keep could be defended against an enemy. Even with bowmen to pick off the spearmen the keep can be held under cover of shields, Landrey said as he unlocked the great door. But no sooner was he across the threshold than he stumbled over a sleeper, falling on his face, and for a long time they were in darkness amid a hustle of men making off in search of other sleeping-quarters. At last recovering the lost lantern, Landrey said: If the Earl's messenger had warned me of your arrival, sir, these fellows would not be lying about half asleep, half drunk; and in answer to Ulick's questions he told that the roused men were Irish allies, whose fault was that they never knew on which side they had engaged themselves to fight. Do you feed in this hall and sleep in it? Ulick asked. Sometimes we eat and sleep here, but the Earl's message came to me that the hall should be a privy residence for you, sir, whilst staying with us, and in this much I beg that your will shall not conflict with your father's. I have had notice of the coming of carriers from Cong bringing beds and bed-linen, and I shall hope for a louver: one is needed; and he piled logs on the hearth built under a hole in the roof, the smoke passing out, to their admiration— The wind being favourable, Landrey said; but the words had barely passed his lips when a change in the wind's direction filled the hall with smoke. If the door of the keep be kept shut, Ulick remarked, the smoke will find its way out; but he was told that though the door was closed, winds came down from the loopholes above on the staircases. And raising their eyes Ulick

and Tadhg saw that the walls of the castle were solid only to a height of twenty feet; higher up they enclosed stairways, leading to the battlements, and the advantage of these was explained by Landrey. If the spearmen were shot by bowmen, he said, we should draw the ladders up after us and defend the castle from the stairs. But we shall have time to talk of the defence of the castle to-morrow. Here are some rugs. Once more, let me tell you how sorry I am that your first night in Castle Carra will be spent on the cold stones. There is a rug apiece, and here are two more. Now, sleep be with you.

It will be hard to sleep on these stones, Ulick said when Landrey had closed the door behind him. Does your honour remember the round tower at Ardrahan? Thou'rt thinking, said Ulick, of the stairs above us, reached by long ladders; well, think of them and cease thy prate, for I would sleep. Very soon he was calling to Tadhg for another rug, but in spite of it the same chilly discomfort kept him awake, and he despaired. But sleep came at last, and when he opened his eyes his surprise was great. Now, what do I see on the table yonder, Tadhg? Cakes that are still hot, master, and you would do well to eat them whilst they are hot. A good thought, said Ulick; and when he had eaten many hot cakes and drunk a cup of mead, he asked Tadhg if it were true that he liked French wine better than mead. And Tadhg, guessing the aim of the question, answered: I have no quarrel with French wine, your honour; and have good news to tell you about the beds. The steads and sheets and pillows will be here before the week is out. I hear somebody at the door. Captain Gustave Landrey asks if he may accompany your honour round the castle. Why does Captain Landrey remain on the threshold? Tadhg whispered: When I told him that your honour was breaking his fast he said he would wait. Beg him to come in, Ulick said, and Landrey, a full-bellied man with round

face and flushed cheeks, came in speaking of the beautiful summertime. I hear that no rain has fallen for seven weeks, Ulick said. Not a drop, answered the captain. A cup of mead for you, Captain Gustave Landrey? A hearty health to you, Sir Ulick de Burgo! and having drunk he laid down the cup and broached his errand. You have lived in Castle Carra longer than I have, Captain Landrey, so I would have you take me round the battlements and tell me how the castle should be defended if the King of Sligo, whoever he may be, should lay siege. I'd like you to see Lough Carra from the battlements, Landrey answered. And I am willing to see it with you; but do not disclose the prospect to me before I see it, Ulick replied. The lake would exceed my telling this fine morning, the sun disclosing— Hush! Ulick interjected, and they went up the last steps of the stairs laughing, to view a mild and gracious lake amid low shores vanishing into grey distances, the lake curving round island fortresses and forests.

The Welsh were invaders in the twelfth century, Landrey said, and the wandering harpers have long stories to tell. A land that has always inspired invaders, Ulick answered. But I see two lakes, one on my left hand and one on my right. Not two lakes but one lake, for if your honour will follow the line of that long tongue of forest to its very tip, you will see that it does not join the Partry shore. A strait is there, and Lough Carra widens out again. I like the eastern lake better than the western, said Ulick; a lake is always lonely, and a lake without islands is desolate. Our lake is not without islands, Landrey answered; and the loveliest island of all lies under our shores, to-day without a hermit; but in the ninth century Marban, a hermit-poet, made his dwelling there. You must see it, sir, and Ballintober Abbey at the end of a long marsh, on a knoll, built by Roderick O'Conor, last King of Ireland. Castle de Burgo stands a little farther

down the lake, between Castle Carra and Ballinrobe, and between Ballinrobe and Castlebar there are two castles, and between Ballyglass and Ballinafad there are two more; and all of these castles are garrisoned by Norman soldiers—the smallest garrison is twenty-five men and an officer. There are but three or four miles between the castles, and the lighting of a beacon lantern on any one of them would bring from two hundred and fifty to three hundred men marching to help. Bruce will never wrench Castle Carra from our grip, said Ulick. But I did not come to Castle Carra to defend it, but to lead troops into battle when the Sligo men cross the frontier; for the threat is that they will pour into Mayo as soon as Bruce begins his march southward. Your face bespeaks doubt, Landrey. Mayhap, Sir Ulick, it does. We will talk of invasion from the Sligo border anon; I will now lead you through the gable end to the opposite staircase. Ireland is a rich and beautiful country, so I shall be sorry if we cannot keep her out of the hands of the Bruces. We shall not fail to keep her, Ulick answered. If we keep her we shall have to learn a language rough as the walls about us and live as the Irish live, always at war or quarrel. You speak Irish, Sir Ulick? I was born in Ireland, Landrey, and spoke French with my mother and father, Irish with Tadhg, who came to France with me and learnt to like French wine without giving much thought to the language. Dost hear me, Tadhg? Yes, your honour, I hear; but I'm seeking . . . Seeking what, Tadhg? A chest in which to keep your clothes, master. God grant that the carriers will bring us a couple. God grant they may! Ulick answered.

Landrey asked Ulick if he would care to come round the castle with him to see the eighty men-at-arms, all of whom, he averred, would be pleased to meet their new commander. On our way to the men's quarters we shall pass through the kitchens, sir, and coming from France

you will be able to tell that there are other ways of cooking pork than boiling it. We have tried beef and mutton, but so inferior are they that we have returned to boiled pork and beans. Which repeated too often, sets you all grunting, said Ulick. It does indeed, Landrey replied; our cook, though a Frenchman, is very Irish through no fault of his own, for his father died when he was on the breast. In how many ways, Tadhg, canst thou prepare beans and pork? Ulick asked. In a dozen, Tadhg answered. Then, Tadhg, thou'lt instruct the cook, for he knows but one. I'd do it gladly, your honour, if I had more French on the tongue. Around the pots and pans you will come to an understanding! And on these words they passed through the great door into the sunny air and waited on top of the steps to admire better the pink bellies of the pigs, whose enjoyment in the sun Landrey explained by the fact that they had just come from the trough and were digesting their meal. I cast no blame upon the pigs, sir (they do all they can to become good pork), but upon the cook and an iron pot. Tadhg, said Ulick, thou'lt impart thy cooking to the wretched Norman who boils pork in a pot. I would not have believed your story, Captain Landrey, had I not heard it from your own lips! Such stories are sad, but lose some of their sadness when told on a lovely autumn morning on steps above an orchard, when damsons are darkening in the branches and the mint bed loses its scent, and the season of pork in all its multiple varieties is about to begin! Now, what do I hear? said Landrey. The rumbling of cart wheels and the cries of carters that the drawbridge shall be lowered—your beds and bedding arriving from Cong, sir. I must give my orders. Tadhg will give them for you, Captain Landrey, if you will allow him. My father sent me to Castle Carra for I needed a battle; a battle, he said, will be fought at Balla when Bruce leaves the north for Dublin. But you think differ-

ently; your face tells me you do. If your father told you— My father is in Galway out of the way of news from Sligo; but our scouts bring you news from the Sligo border daily or weekly. A scouting party returned yesterday, sir, with the news that 1318 is the richest year within the memory of the oldest man, and that the folk were in the fields shearing sheep, stacking corn and gathering apples—1318 will be such a year for cider as Ireland has never known. But if messengers have brought the Earl your father other news, I would have you ride into Sligo yourself to inquire out the chances of a battle at Balla. It might be well for me to do so, for my hopes are plighted to a battle. Carts and waggons are waiting at the drawbridge, and if you have any orders, Sir Ulick? I will leave the settlement of the beds and benches to you, Captain Landrey, and the business of the castle you will attend to, leaving me to admire the fortifications.

He had not strayed very far when he began to perceive that every yard of the headland had been built over, except a strip of shore that promised no secure foundation for the masses of stone the Irish masons had piled up with a view to building a castle impregnable though battering-rams were used against it. An easy castle to hold, he said, and a hard one to take by assault—or by siege, he added; boats sailing from Ballinrobe could revictual it from time to time; a huddle of men, eighty-three in all, counting Landrey and myself, the keep given over to me and the best house to him, the soldiers lying down in any shelter they can find, a great number lodging in the cellars of the keep. And picking his way over the hot limestone shore and up the withered grass of the hillside, he passed into the forest, asking himself if he would remain cast away in this outlying fort till the Scots were driven out of Ireland. Bermingham must know that nobody in Sligo is thinking of leaving a rich harvest—Landrey's spies reported it as being the richest for many

years; or maybe Bermingham mistrusts the soldiers I would bring with me from Galway, or myself, being a De Burgo. . . . I should have gone to London, to the King; Edward would have received me, mayhap put me at the head of an army on its way to Ireland, and at the head of five hundred English soldiers Bermingham would have accepted me as an ally. But I acted on impulse, without foresight, and here I am in Castle Carra, with nothing in front of me but an unwilling return to a country where I was well received, and might be again. And stooping under boughs he followed the paths of deer, confessing himself all the time, saying: I went to Normandy to find love and met many women anxious to be wheedled, sang, drank wine, and pursued adventures till love, ashamed, called to chastity for protection. A roe deer bounded from the bracken in front of him, scattering his thoughts, and when he recovered them he was not certain that he had not come upon a successor to Jaufre Rudel in himself. Or the germ of one, he said; and he recalled the day he had confided his doubts to the Comtesse d'Artois whilst walking with her through the parakeet room, the room of roses and of lilies, and the room of shields, towards the room in which she transacted the business of her great estates, bedroom and oratory in one. The coverlet, the hangings of the bed—all were distinct, and her voice and his as they sat knee to knee. In youth we are content to let love go, for there is but little pleasure with the beloved. Is pleasure then with the casual rather than with the beloved? In the presence of the beloved we cannot fix our thoughts, and pleasure is overawed, annihilated by the greater emotion. Which do you place the higher, Comtesse, love or passion? I am surprised that a trouvère should be in doubt! And she spoke of Jaufre Rudel, who loved only the Princess of Tripoli and said when he was laid dying at her feet: To see thee is enough! and of Rambaut

d'Orange, who loved all his life the Comtesse d'Urgel, whom he never saw and who never saw him. Neither time nor death can rob us of our love, if we love. Men and women have died of love, killed themselves for love, and sought the calm of the cloister so that they might better fix their thoughts on some saint in heaven, and there being only truth yonder, they are the happiest of all lovers, maybe. But it is a mistake to distinguish between lovers, for all who love pass through life hardly aware of life's tribulations and deceptions.

So did she speak, and whilst listening to her it seemed to me that my youth was flitting from me, and that the days in Normandy were taken over by a new spirit of sense. I was not a mile out of Hesdin when the thought came that I should put myself as Sir Galahad into rhyme and music. Fond days of springtide, how quickly over! We outlive you, but we never outgrow you. Even now in this wild forest I feel that a chaste life is the intenser life, and that Soracha, the king's daughter who entered a convent in the belief that a saint in heaven is a more worthy object of love than a knight, will inspire the love that I did not find in Normandy. Thy name, he cried, frightening a bird in the branches, thy name compels me to order that horses be ready at daybreak! But will the recognition on the balcony be a delight to one, or to both? And if neither be what the other imagined, sad indeed will be our plight by the window, Tadhg waiting below with the horses. And if we are overtaken by priests and hirelings and brought back prisoners? Our horses are too swift. Our real danger is that Soracha, overcome by the length of the ride, will be unable to keep the saddle till we reach the bridge-head at Athlone. Once at the bridge-head we shall be safe, and to bring partial forgetfulness of her pains I will sing and teach her to play the lute, and she will tell me how she came to enter a convent when she was seventeen. As I sit watchful at

her bed-side I shall hear her say: No blame can be cast upon my good, kind father, who would have had me remain in his court, doing honour to it, but I felt that only the cloister could save me from the storms I could not control. Her story is mine; in it I shall view myself as in a mirror; and receiving her intimate confidences, I shall be able to tell her that I have been through the same transports and ecstasies, saying: A sinner I am, come out of many short-lived loves, desiring one love and only one, a love of many to-morrows. And having fixed her attention with these words, it will be well to pass on to the instruction I received from Mahaut. Didst love her very dearly? she will ask, and I shall answer: Love I can scarcely call it—a grand and beautiful nature, but past her time for love, of which she has had much. I shall ask Soracha if it were worth while for the sake of passion to sacrifice love, and she will answer: Ulick, I am thine to love as thou pleasest, with such restraint or ecstasy as may seem to thee good. Or it may be that my avowals will darken her sunny face and that her manner will change towards me, for what more natural than that in her innocence she should think and perhaps say: If I am not to have a real lover I might as well have remained in the convent. I shall answer: I rescued thee from the convent at thy bidding; as a knight I could not do else; but the vows of knighthood do not commit me further than a rescue. If thou shouldst perchance find love to be enough, come with me to Castle Carra, and if thou art not sure thou canst withstand the tests I shall put upon thee, I will send a message to thy father's court to tell him where he will find thee, and with a short good-bye return to defend Castle Carra against imaginary enemies. . . .

To-morrow morning we start for Durrow, he added, as he passed out of the forest into a patch of waste ground where a chill wind shed the gold from some young birch

trees. Clouds are gathering; there'll be rain to-night. And Tadhg being still away with the boar hunters, he bethought himself of Soracha's portrait, locked in a box that a soldier would be able to prise open with mallet and chisel. A soldier was sent with these, and when the lid was lifted off and the great door had closed behind the soldier, Ulick was on his feet and then upon his knees in front of the box, marvelling at the beauty of the face. The head drooped a little and the inclination of the body reminded him of a woman in an ivory or a Book of Hours, and he admired the thick hair wound about the head, the long robe open at the neck, the girdle at the waist from which hung a great burden of trinkets; and more than ever certain that the story of the portrait and the message come overseas was a recurrence of an eternal legend, to be lived again, the thought returned to him of a knight riding to receive his reward from Arthur. In my case from the King of Kings, my reward being the liberation of a soul for love's own sake; and in the performance of this knightly errand I shall be the well beloved of the Deity whence all things come and to which all things return. But Tadhg—where is Tadhg? And in search of Tadhg he left the keep to wander again in the forest, his imagination running into a song for her, that he committed to memory as he composed it, changing the rhymes when they did not correspond to his thoughts. Three times he repeated it to himself, and then the melody taking him unawares he walked towards the castle, to hear from the watchman as he passed that Tadhg had returned. A welcome bit of news this was, and taking down his harp from the wall he sought the chords that would enhance the melody, till his gleeman sat up in bed to ask the name of the tune; whereupon followed a little parley, Tadhg declaring that the melody was one that would have stirred the whole of Normandy. Think not of Normandy,

Tadhg; we are not riding to Normandy to-morrow but to Ballinrobe. We shall need three horses—— Why three horses, your honour? Tadhg asked. Inquire not at midnight the pleasures of to-morrow, Ulick answered; leave to-morrow to live its own life. Now I bid thee to thy slumbers, with this to dream upon; three horses to be ready at the bridge-head at eight. . . . Three horses! said Tadhg to himself; but who will ride the third? And hearing his master breathing peacefully, he drew the blanket over his chin, muttering: He is back in France in his dreams, his head in a lady's lap. We all have our faults, every one of us! Who will ride the third horse? he repeated on opening his eyes at daybreak, and there being no woman in Ballinrobe he'd as much as look at, one pair of breeches and one hat is as good as another. But it's time the ostlers had their orders; and drawing on his boots he added: There's nothing like a boot to wake up the sluggard! And he remained with them lest they should fall asleep again till the time came for him to return to the keep to help the master in his dressing.

Still asleep! he said as he pushed the great door open warily. I dare not take him by the shoulders, for roused out of his sleep suddenly he is not himself at all. And he busied himself with his master's clothes till Ulick opened his eyes and called for his leather breeches. Here they are, your honour; and timorous he watched the wide shoulders, the ripple of the spine, the lank hips and the small, trim rump, the thin legs and the slender feet. No wonder they're after him, he said to himself. Who wouldn't be, if she were a woman! I had thought to have a dip in the lake, Tadhg, before we started. But an Irish lake is full of cold water in September. My cloak, Tadhg! Which of them? Tadhg asked. The warmest; and my spurs. As he descended the steps of the keep the rowels of his spurs caught in the stonework and Tadhg was bidden to unbuckle them for him. I

never spur the mare, but a horseman is hardly a horseman without spurs, said Ulick, and Tadhg muttered to himself: The same on this side as in France! But on whom will the spurs put the comether? In which castle of the many does she live? The portcullis was raised, and as they passed underneath it a tall, restive mare whinnied, laid her ears back, reared, and tried to break away from the ostler, who refused to let her head go till Ulick called: Let her come! Let her come! And being loosed, she quieted at once and walked to him, mayhap with a memory in her handsome brown head of the morsel of honeycomb which she had often licked from his hand. He had brought her carrots that morning, and she followed him about, coaxing him for another and still another whilst he walked to and fro with Landrey, Tadhg viewing the long-plumed hat with suspicion, saying to himself: If Bruce was out in the north the master would wear his helmet. There's a chill wind blowing and your honour would do well to draw your cloak about you. Ulick put his arms through the sleeves and sprang into the saddle. She will outpace the roadsters, he said, turning to an ostler. The grey that Tadhg rides, the ostler answered, is a fast one, and won't be far behind the mare if you match them.

Now, your honour, I'd make bold to ask—— We are going to Donogh O'Brien to buy a harp, Tadhg. Donogh O'Brien? He is at Ballinrobe—don't I know it well—— And I have heard, said Ulick, heedless of his servant's interruption, that by keeping close to the lake we shall shorten our road by three miles at least. Michael Fogarty, the ostler, Tadhg answered, he that comes from Mucloon, the green hill over against the Ballinrobe road (didn't we pass it by on our way from Cong?) told me no later than this morning not to try the short cut if we were riding to Ballinrobe, for it is choked with blackthorn and hazel and we'd be hard set to get the horses

through. But we aren't thinking of riding abreast, Tadhg. Even one by one, your honour, we might fail to get through; and coming home in the evening the harp might be scratched off my back, for I'd be loth to trust one of Donogh's harps to a pack-horse. The harper that can't carry a harp on his own back is—— We shall go round by Carnacun, Ulick answered drily. If I say another word he'll tell me to go home! and they rode without speaking to the muddy pools of Carnacun, out of which snipe rose in hundreds, to go away zig-zagging over the pines. A heron flopping up the sky, his long legs trailing behind him, his spear-like beak in the air, recalled a great falconry on the banks of the Loire, and they rode on again till they came to a piece of green turf that promised so well for a canter that Ulick cried back: Do as well with the grey as thou canst, for the mare won't settle down till she's had a gallop; and pulling hard, she carried Ulick into sight of a green lake curving round low shores, where he reined in to await the arrival of Tadhg and the pack-horse. An ascending road was taken at a fine swinging trot that came to an end on the hilltop, for below them a great marsh seemed to challenge their advance towards Ballinrobe.

We crossed this marsh on the night we rode from Cong; I remember the hill and beyond it the hurdle-bridge over the river Anise. If your honour will take charge of the pack-horse I'll ride on in front, and it won't be long before I find the stepping-stones that we came by. Ulick took the leading-rein, and whilst Tadhg rode among the reeds he watched the wheeling gulls. A cormorant making for a ruined castle that the Welsh had built under the high Brownstown shore helped the time away, and when it lagged unduly he cried to Tadhg: Hast found the causeway? Not yet, your honour, but I'm on the track of it. At last a halloa from Tadhg and the sight of the little man half-way out in the marsh set

him thinking of the descent of the hill, not an easy matter because of the pack-horse, a jibber, that for the nonce showed himself tractable enough, venturing out on the causeway, to turn aside, however, at the hurdle-bridge, and it was not till the leading-rein was thrown over to Tadhg that he was persuaded; the mare followed, and the bridge was crossed by all three horses without accident. The red bog ends a mile ahead of us, your honour, and the choice will be to turn to the right and cut off a mile of our journey to Ballinrobe, or—— Why should we not save our horses that mile? Ulick interjected. A mile and a half, Tadhg answered, and they followed the long, straight path, startled by grouse that rose up with a whirr and skimmed away almost out of view. They'll not leave the heather, said Tadhg. You see the village yonder, marked with its poplar-tree? They'll wheel when they get there! A shallow stream at the bog's end was forded with Tadhg trying to tell of the fine castle that had once stood atop of the Brownstown hill, built by a Welshman to defend his lands against all comers: But when your father raided this country thirty years ago he burnt the Welshman's castle. And whilst they rode side by side over the hill Tadhg told a story of burnings and rapine, to which Ulick gave but half an ear, for what his eyes saw interested him more, and what they saw were hazel thickets striving to hold their own against their ancient enemy. It's always hazel against blackthorn, he said, just as it's always Celt against Norman. After a descent through great rocks the country began to improve, so it seemed to him, and he continued: Hazel and blackthorn are rife, but there are many green fields in which cattle graze; elms, too, decorate the roadway and there are walls. And where there are walls and elms there are Normans, he added triumphantly, and looking over one of the walls he beheld deer grazing. Normans and venison imply

Ballinrobe; we cannot be more than a mile from the first roofs, Tadhg. The road is becoming strangely familiar. I have seen these fields full of corn; and we shall soon come upon a triangular piece of grass, the village green—where I saw a woman jump through hoops from a bare-backed horse, and a bear dance. Five minutes later he said: We are now in full view of Ballinrobe. In old days there was no bridge; my father rode through the ford up the high street. But look at the limes! Father and mother and I used to walk there in the days when I sailed my boat in the Robe. My father told me I'd barely recognise the high street, rebuilt to the image of Courancy in memory of my mother. Courancy in Ballinrobe! Ulick cried as they rode past peaked gables, impending storeys, and red-tiled roofs with dormer windows. We turn to the right at the top of the hill, and a hundred yards will bring us to Donogh O'Brien's—a stone house with mortared walls and a handsome thatch, standing some dozen or fifteen yards behind the main street. Now, Tadhg, call, and as loudly as you can, for the house is as industrious as a hive, everybody intent on his job. And in answer to Tadhg's repeated calls a lad came. An apprentice, Ulick said, and dressed for the part—a leathern apron from his neck to his knees, and clogs on his feet. Is the master in? he asked, and canst thou manage the three horses? He is in, your honour; but the mare is too game for me. Go to her head, Tadhg; she guesses a stable and the oats are in her mind. On these words Ulick opened a small wooden gate, and he was about half-way down the paved path when the door of the house opened.

God bless the day that gives me sight of you again, Sir Ulick! And an old faded hand grasped Ulick's hand, and he was drawn into a house that he knew full well, for in his boyhood it was his pleasure to come hither to work at the lathe. You see the thrush's cage that you

made with your own hands, and the boat with all her sails set that you left behind. But you'll tell me now if this be the first sight you have had of Ballinrobe—what am I saying? When you came up from Cong you must have ridden through Ballinrobe. I did, Ulick answered, but it was dark night; so it was to-day that I saw for the first time Courancy in Ballinrobe. Courancy is the Normandy village in which my mother was born. The old faded hand went to a red beard that curled into grey knots. Well, you'll be telling us all about your travels. It would take more than to-day and to-morrow to tell all about our travels, though they were only from castle to castle, spreading the knowledge of Irish music and the instrument for which it was written. I have made better harps since those days, Donogh answered. I have a young man with me, he continued, who can decorate and inlay with any man that ever lived on the top of this earth. And I have a great harper, Donogh; he is in the stables now with the horses, but he'll be here anon. Is your honour talking to me of the great Tadhg O'Dorachy, your father's harper, he who was taught by Finn Lorcan himself? The same, Ulick answered. Here he is. Thou hast heard all the great harpers; to-day thou shalt hear the greatest of all. A bad time it is, said Tadhg, to hear a harper and he after a ten-mile ride, one hand on his own bridle and the other tight on the leading-rein. On the leading-rein? Donogh interjected. We have a third horse, said Ulick, for I would buy a harp from thee, Donogh O'Brien. The harp is safest on the harper's back, Donogh answered. So Tadhg has already told me, Donogh! and he spoke so drily that Tadhg hoped Donogh would find words to carry the talk on. But Donogh waited for Tadhg to release him from his embarrassment.

'Tis the fine drying-room thou hast here, Tadhg said at last. For oak and willow wood, Donogh answered,

that will be well seasoned and safe from warp when it comes under the saw and chisel. Yonder are the workers. And when he had thrown open the door of the workroom the apprentices showed in leather aprons and shirt sleeves turned up, some sawing wood laid across trestles, others seated at work-tables set between the windows. Some providence must have chosen your visit to Ballinrobe, Sir Ulick, for to-day I looked over for the last time the harps that I have made for the daughters of King O'Melaghlin, three of the beautifullest women in Ireland and great harp-players all three. Dost know, Donogh, the names of the Princesses who will receive these harps? This one, said Donogh, is for Princess Muirgil and its brother is for Princess Liadin, and this one will be sent by King O'Melaghlin to his youngest daughter, Princess Soracha, who was called by God in all the beauty of her youth away from her father's court to live in a convent, where she is praying night and day that we may all be saved and meet in heaven. The apprentices held down their heads abashed, and Ulick said that the day was not far distant when France would be sending orders to Ballinrobe for more harps than Donogh O'Brien would be able to finish, though he lived till the end of the century; and it seeming to him that the moment had come for a little speech, he enjoined the apprentices to remember always that they were working under the eyes of the greatest harp-maker ever known in Ireland. On coming to the end of his words he took the harp destined for the Princess Soracha from Donogh, and running his fingers over the strings he said: As beautiful to hear as it is to see, but the sight of this harp saddens me. Now why, your honour, is there sadness in the sight of my harp? Donogh asked, and Ulick answered: I came here to-day to buy the loveliest thing in Ireland, and I find the three loveliest things are for the daughters of King O'Melaghlin. Don't you begrudge these harps, said

Donogh, for you shall have one equal to them—who knows, superior to them; for though the three harps seem to be my masterpieces to-day, I may not be satisfied with them to-morrow. I did not say I had no oak as good as the oak that went into the making of these harps, and the willow wood I shall put into the harp that I shall make for you, sir, has been seasoning in this warm room since the day you first saw it. I want all thy skill, Donogh, for my harp.

So he is thinking out, Tadhg muttered, a gift of a harp to some great Princess! Shall I send the harp when it is finished to Galway? asked Donogh, or to Castle Carra? Send it to Castle Carra, Ulick answered. So she is coming to Castle Carra! Tadhg said to himself, and he waited trembling, for only a moment seemed to separate him from the name of the Princess—a name that would have been spoken, so he thought, if Donogh had not engaged Sir Ulick's attention on the oak wood which he would use for the upright pillar and the willow wood for the sounding-board, with four sounding-holes, all ornamented with silver bosses and fine carvings. And to show the harp he had in mind, Donogh took a burnt stick and drew, inviting Ulick's admiration (as the harp began to shape itself in his imagination) of the escutcheons charged with bears, carved and gilt, and of the brass tuning-pins which he proposed should be tipped with silver; of these there would be thirty instead of the usual twenty-eight. But I would like to show you, Sir Ulick, some other harps, and my foreman and apprentices will be duly honoured if you will follow me round the workroom and speak some words to them of their skill, should their skill meet with your approval. He led them to the different tables at which the apprentices worked, and Ulick was shown the carved patterns with which the harps were embellished. An ugly harp never comes out of this house, Donogh, but I fear that thou'lt fail to surpass the harps

thou'rt making for King O'Melaghlin's daughters. The harp I shall make for you, your honour, will equal, as I have said, if it does not beat those I am sending to Lough Ennel to-morrow or the day after, and by the King's own messenger. And now having seen all that I have to show you, let us get back to the front room, where you will find a table set with bread and meat and beer, but poor fare, only fit for a craftsman, his aids and apprentices; if your honour will partake of it—— Bread and cheese are tasty in the mouth of a man who rose at seven, Donogh, and thy ale will be welcome, and to prove it, pass me that piggin and I'll empty it without drawing breath; which he did. Now tell me, Donogh O'Brien—the house in which my mother lived still stands? Faith, it does, and just as it was the day her ladyship left it for ever, and will stand, with nothing taken from it and nothing put into it, till everything crumbles into the dust out of which all things came and into which all things will go—the Earl's own words to me on the day that he left Ballinrobe, where he spent the happiest years of his life, surely. Every door and shutter is locked and barred —but no doubt these very same words you have heard from himself before you left Galway. Yes, indeed, Ulick answered, and my father will ask me many questions when I return. So we'll walk round the house and garden together, though of little avail it will be to me to see them, for being both in my imagination, reality will merely blot the remembrance. Not blot it, sir. Dim it, alter it, Ulick continued, rob me of something. But since my father wishes it, we will go thither after the meal.

And having eaten they set out together, leaving Tadhg saying to himself: if he does not care to see the old house he was brought up in, why does he go thither with Donogh? And why am I told to wait for him here? Because he would collogue with Donogh about things

that he wants me to be in the dark about! And having guessed that this was so, Tadhg pondered as his fingers ran over the strings, pausing from time to time so that he might think better why Sir Ulick had gone to see the house with Donogh O'Brien, leaving him behind—surely because he wished to find out from Donogh any news that might be going round about Bruce? Harpers come hither from the east and the west, from the north and the south; every harper in Ireland has been to Donogh's workshop to buy a harp, or to get new strings, or to have a broken harp mended, so not a thing can fall out in Ireland without Donogh knowing it. The visit to Ballinrobe is but a blind, for he knows well that he couldn't get a harp from Donogh O'Brien under three months; and we are travelling with a third horse to carry harps that are still in the wood! Tadhg recalled Donogh's words: A harp is nowhere as safe as on the harper's back. What I said myself! The mystery is in that third horse. And it's a poor thing that after all these years Donogh O'Brien should be trusted and myself treated like a newcomer. It is, faith! and to stay his tears his hands went again to the strings, this time bringing the apprentices out of the workroom. As if fearing to tread the earth they came, and the spell was not broken till Sir Ulick and Donogh came through the door talking of the shortest way to Dunmore. So we are going to Dunmore! he said to himself, and he watched a chart being made by Donogh; and his faith in being able to reach Dunmore that night by the aid of the chart deserting him suddenly, he said: We shall be lost in brake and forest, your honour, for what is more like one hill than another hill? or one bit of forest than another bit of forest? There's a great sameness even in rivers, all green and slow at the edges, with a stickle in the middle. I'm thinking it would be as well to put a boy from Ballinrobe on the pack-horse. Donogh O'Brien says

we cannot miss the road, Ulick answered; and now let us away, for the day will be nigh ended by six.

We are going beyond Dunmore, said Tadhg to himself, for if we weren't he'd have a boy up on the pack-horse. But ask no questions and you'll be told no lies, as my mother used to say in the Galway kitchen when I asked her what she was putting in the pot. So he climbed into the saddle, and it didn't take them more than five minutes to reach the open country. East by south, said Ulick; isn't that what Donogh said? East by south he said, your honour, Tadhg answered; and the going seeming to them good they cantered and trotted for a few miles, and were able to keep the line, having the sun behind them. We'll be all right whilst the sun is up, said Tadhg, and as Ulick did not answer he began to remember the vow he had made in the presence of the priest that he would have no hand, act, or part again in the deceiving of poor women—not that he pitied them, for they should be able to mind themselves; often enough it was the women started the game, casting their eyes about, looking everywhere except where they were going. But when he is called up before God on the last day it won't help him much to argue that it was the women set him off. Every mother's son of you, God will say, is ready enough for sin, ever since Eve brought the apple to Adam and the two of them ate it in the garden; and it's small sign I see in any one of you, and small wish in any one of you, to keep each other away from the snares the Devil is always laying; rather you are ready to push each other into them. The God of the Day knows that and the rest of it. He will call up the Angel of the Book and it will be all read out, my own share as well as the master's, for if I didn't play the tunes I did the chords, and the bass is as much in the game as the treble is; for I put some fine accompaniments on the tunes the master wrote, and he who works the harmonies is as deep in it as the man

that makes the melody. Didn't the priest in Galway say as much when I went to confession? And Tadhg fell to thinking once more of his vow that he would never go out again woman-hunting with the master. Anything else he asks me to do I'll do for him, but the man that makes a vow and breaks a vow is damned and done for. So now Dunmore or beyond Dunmore into Roscommon, it's all one to me. My conscience is clean, and a man that hasn't a clean conscience might as well be in hell, for then he'd know all that was coming, and the worst of it.

Of what art thou thinking, Tadhg? Never have I known thy tongue so quiet. Like an eel under a comfortable stone it has been for the last four miles, said Tadhg, and I'd be hard put to tell your honour what I was thinking. Just riding, taking no note of the country, said Ulick. Hasn't your honour got the chart? and isn't the chart better than my eyes in a country that I've never seen before? And will you cast your eye over it and tell me if our way is to the right of the hill yonder, or if by going over the hill we might escape that great bit of dark wood stretching up to the horizon. What does the chart say, your honour? Donogh told me that we had better keep a look-out for that dark bit of forest and that we should keep to the right—or was it to the left? Ulick asked. I can't tell, your honour, not being beside yourself at the time. And the talk dropped till Ulick said: I think we did well to keep to the left. Tadhg thought so, too, but he spoke in so aggrieved a tone that Ulick began to wonder what wrong his servant was brooding, and it was to soothe him that he said: Tadhg, when I returned with Donogh from my mother's house I heard thy harp. An angel is playing, I said—— I would not have you say that much, your honour, for no playing in the world could come up to an angel's. How knowest thou? for no more than myself hast thou heard an angel play. I've heard tell, Tadhg answered, of an angel that came to wrestle

with Jacob, but never of a man that heard an angel playing on the harp. And if he did, wouldn't he be caught up on the music and lifted into heaven the way Elijah was? But if thou camest across such a man? How could that be? for no one that was taken up to heaven on an angel's music could come back again, even if he wanted to, which he wouldn't. Thou speakest well, Tadhg. I try to tell the truth, and no more than the truth. But I would hear from thee why thou wouldst not have me compare thy harp-playing to an angel's. Well, then, the angels play their harps before God, don't they? and it isn't likely that he'd have any but the best. None can outplay thee, Tadhg. Not in the county of Galway, your honour, but heaven's another place. When thou'rt taken out of this life and given a place in heaven, a harp will be put into thy hands and thou'lt play before the Most High. I won't be Tadhg O'Dorachy when I do, and if God should claim my playing to be behind an angel's—— He will not, Tadhg, for didn't I think of an angel when I came up the path? and if thy playing wasn't like an angel's playing why should I have thought of an angel? Never in France did thy fingers draw such music from the strings, and the faces of the apprentices when they left were as if they had been listening to strains from heaven. Well, I won't be saying no to that, your honour, for they are Irish and love their country, and a man's love of his country is close, I'm thinking, to his love of God. More than that, the melodies I played were not of yesterday or the day before that, but those that have come from long ago, shaping the souls of the men without their knowing what was happening any more than the tree knows the wind, or the bee knows the flower, or the fawn knows the dug, and they all taking what the Lord gives without a question or a word. Thou speakest so well, Tadhg, that I'd learn from thee why it is that being Irish as the woods about us and the fields that we walk in and the

skies above us are Irish, thou has ranged thyself with the Normans rather than with thine own chieftains.

Often, whilst watching my mother bending over the kneading-tray I've thought of Ireland shaping the races that came to conquer her and doing what she liked with them. First were the Firbolgs, and they were but bits of dough under Ireland's knuckles; and the same with the Celts. No sooner were the Firbolgs out of Connaught and the islands beyond Connaught, than Ireland was kneading the Celt, and he taking the fresh shape as easily as the Firbolgs and the Da Danaans did before him. And now the Normans are being kneaded, and many are as kindly Irish as if they were of the seed of Ir and Ever. The Scots left us, there being not room enough for them here, and when our race leaves Ireland for Scotland, they do not become less Irish for the crossing of twenty miles of salt water. The Irish spoken in Scotland is the same as our own, and the songs are our own songs, or so like them that none can tell an Irish from a Scotch song, or the other way about. So it matters not at all to us what race is in Ireland; it's Ireland matters and nothing else, for she is the great plasterer, joiner, carpenter, carver and mason. Now I'll put it to your honour: would I have been a better Irishman if I had followed Richard Bermingham to Athenry, or joined Felim who deserted your father when he went north to chase Bruce out of the country? It was at Connor that William de Burgo was made a prisoner, but he was ransomed by your father in time to take his share of the battle of Athenry—I don't know if your father told you the full story of the battle, for Bruce is always before him, making ready for a pounce on Dublin; or did you talk about the great Celtic Kingdom, Scotland, Ireland, Man, Wales and Cornwall? Well, it was a great dream and one that may come true before the story's done, for it's not certain that Sir John Bermingham will prove the

better man of the two. My father said the great Celtic kingdom would be no dream at all, Tadhg, if the Irish weren't divided amongst themselves. Maeve all but had it, Brian Kennedy of the Tribute had it, and King Robert said the same before he left Ireland. Now you are talking fair, your honour—if we weren't divided we'd be the top of this earth, and to this no man can say nay; for we have more than any other people the two things that make for greatness. And what are those two things, Tadhg? Love of God and love of country. A man must love himself, Tadhg, if he'd be a man; a race is but a number of men. Now I know what is running in your honour's head; the talk we used to be hearing in France; Nominalism, they called it, and Realism. I'm with the Church always myself, she being a better judge than I am of philosophies and such like. It is enough for me and my likes to have a good religion and a good country, and whoever has them two has enough to be thinking about without thinking of himself into the bargain; without them what better is he than a mouse or a cockroach that lives and dies and has his time behind the wainscot. And which does he get the best worth out of, Tadhg, his religion or his country? His country may be shook to a heap by a quake of the earth or eaten into empty caves by the sea, but his religion cannot be taken from him; like Connla's apple, it never grows less. You know the story, your honour? No, faith, or have forgotten it! None forgets the story of Connla and the girl who came to him from the Shí and threw him an apple which he was to eat; and though he ate of the apple every day it remained the same apple as before; only he was changed; and at last he had to follow the maiden into the sea, for she was a sea-maiden and lived in Tir nan Og; drowned he was in crossing the water.

The story thou tellest, Tadhg, is one of Pagan Ireland. Wasn't Ireland always the same, your honour, not a

sword being lifted by a Pagan against a Christian, or by a Christian against a Pagan? and the same is a great honour to us and puts Ireland above the nations for Christianity. Our soggarts were wiser than the priests of here and there, for without overturning an altar they slipped off their oak leaves and picked up Rome's biretta, and wore it without ever seeking to hush the old stories or to forbid assemblies to do honour to Bel. But, Tadhg, the worship of a false God must have been a great worry to the true God. If it had been indeed, he'd have sent Patrick of the Crozier to us sooner than he did with the news of his son that was born in Galilee. But thou hast said that the Irish do not forget Bel. They'd put it that a false God was better than never a God at all, and now that they have got the true God they think of Bel the way we think of the playthings of our childhood, of the first room we ran about in, of our first walk in the woods, of the lake that we saw for the first time, and the hill, the foxes, the wolves and the stags, and our wonder at a far off mountain, of the music we heard and the prayers that were taught us. Wouldn't it be a sorrowful thing indeed if we had no thought for the past that we come out of? For it would be like having no childhood to look back upon, and Bel was the childhood of religion. A false God your honour says he was, but our fathers would have been badly off without him; and didn't we come upon proof in Castle Carra that the past is never dead in Ireland, no more than our fathers which live again in us? For the men that were called upon ten years ago to dig the moat said that they would'nt put hand to shovel to disturb the rock that stood in the way of the moat, and it was long enough before the Norman builder could find a why or a wherefore for them not wanting to dig. That rock was Bel's altar once, and every Beltane and Samhain there was a sacrifice on it. By those living now? Ulick asked. By the folk about Castle Carra, your honour. But the

rock is no more, and thou hast not told how it was got rid of to make room for the moat. No one would lay finger or hand on the rock, and the work was at a standstill till Father Irnan, who had never approved of dancing or drinking or feasting, came with the bishop and drove the last of Bel out of the rock with holy water and afterwards with fire. They burnt the old God out by the roots. Burnt Bel out by the roots! Ulick repeated, trying once more to disentangle the shrewd harper from the man of prejudices and tradition, persuasions which he had grown up in, hearing with amazement that there being no piping to throw water on the burning rock, water had been brought through the entrails of Brigit Fahy's bull, slain for the purpose and roasted whole afterwards. A strange barbaric people, he said to himself, in whose country I find myself for no very clear reason, and out of whose country it may be I shall never find my way. Tadhg, in our talk we have lost sight of the road we should follow. The last bit of road, your honour, was leading out of Ballinrobe. In the chart that Donogh O'Brien drew for me there are hills and dales and woods and rivers, lakes even; but none of these things can I find in the country before me. He handed the chart to Tadhg, and reining in their horses they tried to recall the country they had passed through, but could remember no more than that they had ridden up some hills and through some valleys, and had seen many woods and fields and some broken steads.

Since we left Ballinrobe we have been through an empty country, wilderness rather than desert, said Ulick. To keep Connaught free from warfare, my father had to collect all the young men in Mayo and Galway, thereby giving so big an army to Bermingham that Bruce will be defeated between Dundalk and Dublin or forced to retreat. Neither ploughing nor digging has been in Ireland, said Tadhg, this many a day, nor hunting of wolves

or foxes, so these creatures are commoner now than they were before; and the birds are here in greater numbers than were ever seen or heard of, there being no boys about to climb after their nests or take them in snares. The martens are plentiful in the woods, looking upon them as their own, and as we rode by talking about Bel's altar a badger came out of his hole to walk about in broad daylight. The country is said to be wilder in Roscommon than in Galway, and West Meath is the worst of all, as we shall see if we get so far. Ulick did not answer and they rode on, coming soon after to a field that looked as if wheat had been sown in it, but it was hard to tell whether the stubble was wheat stubble or bean. Above nettles some seven or eight feet high they caught sight of a sagging roof, but the way to it was so overgrown that they deemed it deserted; and when they had left the nettles behind them they came upon thistles spilling their seed all over the land. One year's seeding, seven years' weeding, is a true saying, your honour, and their friend the rain was with them last year month after month; a long guesting it was, I'm thinking, and Tadhg pointed to mouldering leaves of coltsfoot and charlock. Before the charlock were poppies, groundsel, shepherd's purse and spurry, and every weed of these weeds is as quick a breeder as a rat; a rat whilst you're looking and another whilst you're not. Young rats, old rats, thin rats, fat rats, left the field, taking refuge in a barn. A sad country, your honour—— We haven't come here, said Ulick, to watch the rats taking a fall and to count the weeds breeding. Is there any thought in thee for the east or the north or the west? East it is, for the sun is behind us, Tadhg answered. Well, let us fare on; whip up the greys, for it cannot be that we shall not come sooner or later to a grassy hill, a shepherd and his flock. And when they had ridden upwards of two miles in silence, it was Ulick that broke into talk: I'm thinking, Tadhg, that we are

tiring our horses in trying to push through this clough, so hard and strong is the bracken; maybe the wood yonder would be easier. So putting their horses' heads to the sunset they rode out of the clough into the wood. Poor beasts, Ulick continued, they have come thirty miles, and I would tell them if they could understand me of the full manger they'll eat out of if we reach Dunmore to-night. But what evil wood have we come into? Black earth and blackthorns, trees prone and falling on every side, some quaking, unable to stand, like men coming out of a tavern after midnight; a crapulous wood, full of newt and frog and tadpole pool, stinking rooks and nettles—which is the worser? If we meet nothing worse than a nettle and a rook, Tadhg answered, we'll do well, for if I didn't see a wolf just now I saw nothing. But how are we to get out of the wood if we don't go back the way we came? We must push on, said Ulick, for to turn back would dishearten our horses. And in pushing on they were very nearly swept from their saddles by boughs, and the paths were so narrow between hazel and blackthorn that they gave themselves up for lost. Cattle have been through these paths, for their tracks are in the mud. Many's the month since cattle came through this wood, Tadhg answered, a lonesome place, without even a bird in it, and I'm always afraid of a birdless wood. As he spoke the old path broadened suddenly; fields showed through the trees, and Ulick said: Whatever else may happen to us we have passed out of that evil wood! and the question comes: shall we follow the plain or take to the hills? Tadhg answered: We shall have a better chance of finding our way from the hills, and they rode on for another mile or two in disquiet, feeling their horses tiring under them.

We did well to take to the hills, said Ulick, and he sought for the markings in the landscape that he was told to look out for. My eyes are liars if I do not see a

shepherd. Your eyes are no liars, your honour; a shepherd is out before us. But he hears not our horses, nor does his dog smell us though the wind favours him. Canst tell us the way to Dunmore? Tadhg and Ulick shouted together, and the volume of their voices startled the shepherd out of a great loneliness of mind; but his speech was the harsh, uncouth speech of an almost deaf man. Shout in his ear, Tadhg; keep shouting: Dunmore! till he understands, for maybe by riding on a few paces I may come in sight of a sign. And riding on he came to a few sheep. One of the sheep dead, he said, and forgetting the sign he was seeking on the horizon he returned to the shepherd. The third sheep! The third sheep! The Scots have poisoned the wind! The wind is poisoned! The wind is poisoned! the shepherd muttered again and again. At their approach a raven left off picking at the sheep's eyes. No raven was here a while ago, Ulick said. An evil bird, said the shepherd. An evil bird forsooth! said Tadhg. The raven walked aside, and so grave and melancholy was his gait that the fear he inspired was doubled. An evil bird! cried Tadhg once more, and whoever meets one on his journey would do well to return home, for the journey will not prosper any man who meets a raven on the way. How far are we from Dunmore? he shouted into the shepherd's ear, and this time the shepherd understanding him well, said: A matter of ten miles.

Will your honour believe me that it would be well for us to turn back? A raven is but a crow, Tadhg, and a crow is but a jackdaw, and the flight of one out of a chimney should not turn a brave man from his errand, whatever it may be. Thy cheek blanched when I spilt salt at Donogh's board—— It's bad luck to spill the salt, your honour. And on passing through Carnacun the cocks did not crow to thy liking, and at Brownstown a lizard on a path frightened thee. I said no word, but I saw the

fright in thy face. If you saw my fright why did your honour not call me from my horse to kill the lizard? Is a dead lizard, then, less harmful than a live one, Tadhg? Most sure and certain it is, your honour. The cocks will crow to-morrow but not with the same crow, and other things mournful and menacing will happen. Wherefore I ask you, master, to turn aside. Our horses are too tired, Ulick answered, to take us back to Ballinrobe even if we wished to return. See, they are beginning to trot of themselves, scenting their stable. Thy mind is like an old loft full of bats. Think of the supper that awaits us, and the oats and the hay that await these poor beasties that have carried us so far; they would reach Dunmore before the rain—they are not afraid of the raven, the rook, the crow, the jackdaw, the lizard or the frog. We are Christians, they are horses! Ulick heard Tadhg mutter, and they rode on through the dusk, Ulick crying back encouragement to his servant. I would not have thee miss Dunmore, for there is an old wife in the town whom thou shalt consult, and she'll read thee thy story out of the stars. So if thy fear troubles thy belly and turns thee from thy food, a bellyful of oracles I promise thee to-night; stars and old wives shall guide thee. To which banter Tadhg listened with a quivering lip and a faint heart, roused a little out of his fears when the lights of Dunmore showed in the distance.

CHAP. XLVII.

REINING in before a large hovel they asked for shelter and were bidden to come in. But our horses? cried Ulick. The stable is at the far end of the hovel, Tadhg answered, and a woman, lifting down two wooden bars, drove an ass into the backyard, saying: A fine, comfortable stable, and at the service of your honour's horses for to-night and to-morrow and the day after, if you'll be here for

so long. A great fire was burning in the middle of the floor, the smoke escaping through a hole in the roof, and huddled round it were half a dozen men and women, all warming their shins, holding their hands to the blaze. One man, perhaps the man of the house, punched a pig back into his corner out of their way, and the woman who had let them in said: Betsy Egan is with us to-night, the wisest woman in Connaught, and she'll tell you the end of your faring. Give his honour the chance of a warm before he begins to ask a witch to tell him if his journey will end as he wishes it, the man said, and Ulick, who could bear no longer the mingled reek of pig and hen, said he'd rather sleep in the open air. And so that his words should not humble the host, Tadhg added: A wise man he is, too, and great in the reading of the stars. If you'll tell me where the hay is I'll bring him out a couple of trusses to lie himself on. The ass will be munching them, keeping his honour awake, said the woman of the house; and they went out together into the backyard to tie the ass out of reach of the hay. But he brayed so piteously for his fodder later in the night that Ulick untied the halter, yielding some of his bed to the ass for the sake of sleep; and having come some thirty miles sleep fell again so suddenly and heavily upon him that he seemed to have slept but an hour when Tadhg came to him, asking if they should breakfast whilst riding— Or breakfast in the reek of that fire? Ulick asked, swinging himself into the saddle, and he rode without speaking, breaking silence at last, saying: It wasn't for the warmth of the fire thou wast thinking, Tadhg, to bring me into the hovel, but to hear the end of our faring from the wise woman. I wouldn't be saying it wasn't, Tadhg answered, and he kicked the pack-horse out of his way. Always against my leg! Why can't he leave me my share of leg space? So thou thinkest the wise woman could tell me the end of my faring? She is deep, Tadhg answered.

And what dost thou mean by deep? I mean what I say, your honour: deep. She knows things that other people don't know, and she could read your honour in one look. What did she say about me? She said she read a hunger in your eyes which would never be satisfied, though you roamed the country from the Giant's Causeway to the cove of Cork. A hunger in my eyes! What did she mean by that? I can't tell your honour, but there was meaning in it when she said it. Again they rode on, seeking the meaning of the wise woman's words, till Ulick said: And thou, Tadhg, didst sleep as well by the fire as I did under the stars? The jackass was eating the bed from under your honour when I came to you at daybreak. But, Tadhg, I'm asking not how I spent the night, for I know it, but how thou didst spend it by the fire. Seeing sights, Tadhg replied after a pause, that I had hoped never to see again. And what sights may they be? When I was a boy I didn't mind them sights, for I had then no knowledge of the shapes or mis-shapes of womenkind, and wouldn't trouble to look round when they pulled up their smocks so that the warmth of the fire should get at their legs and more than their legs. But now, being a grown man and having come from France and learnt much, I kept on opening an eye to see things that I didn't want to see. But a woman's rump is not an ugly thing, Tadhg. Isn't it, faith? But their rumps wasn't what I feared the most, but when in sleep they turned round the sinful side of them. The sinful side, Tadhg? Well, doesn't your honour know as well as myself that the sin always comes from the bushy side? I can understand thy feelings, Tadhg. No, you can't, your honour, for you're not of my way of thinking and not likely to be, though I shouldn't say it. But as long as there's life there's hope, and I keep on praying that God will bring you back to the Holy Church one day or another when the wickedness has died down in you.

But if thou hadst no thought for women's bodies when a boy, how was it the women kept thee awake last night? Amn't I telling your honour? Lifting their smocks to get the warmth. I am afraid that some wicked thoughts of sins— No, your honour, I never made a sin with a woman yet, and if God's good I never will. Tadhg, let no lie come from thy lips. I'd bite off the end of my tongue first! But there are things that no man should talk about, unless it be to his own priest. I think a priest would say that a man to whom grace has come should make known his good fortune. I wouldn't keep the secret to myself, your honour, if I could believe that it was the grace of God that helped me, but I'm not so sure of that, and it's a thought that has often troubled me. Well, then, tell thy secret, and in putting it into words perhaps we shall be able to give a fair guess whether it was grace or good luck. I have asked the priest himself, a good priest and a clever priest, but he couldn't tell me. Tell me the story, and thou'lt be able to judge thyself as well as a priest. I wouldn't say that, answered Tadhg. Well, perhaps not altogether, but in some ways, for thou'lt be able to hear how the story sounds in the telling. But your honour is not of the persuasion that in Ireland the weak overcome the strong. Who said that? The wise woman herself, and there's something in it, something I've often felt myself. Tell thy story, Tadhg.

It was long ago, before we went to France, at the time when I was playing the harp behind your father's chair, getting a great renown for myself in Ireland. In the times I'm telling you about there were more harpers than there are now at the Earl's court, and every one of them had a story to tell about women; and listening to their talk I would be ashamed, for I had nothing to tell them, and indeed my understanding was so little that I had to ask what happened between them and the girls. Some of the things I asked set them off in great

laughter, but one day I began to think I might go into Galway town and have a talk with one of the girls that I'd find sitting about on the benches, and get tales from her which I could tell as if they were my own. She would want a sum of money before she would tell me the kind of stories I was after, but I had saved enough, and I said: She can't well ask more than two pence to tell the stories that will make me seem as well up in the world as the best of them. So away went I to be made a man of for two pence. A big price, but worth it, I said, for no longer shall I be a jeering stock but as bad as the best of them, in appearance at least. Thoughts like that were twisting in my head and keeping me going whilst walking Galway town in search of a punk, and it wasn't long before I came across two sitting on a bench in the sun. After I'd walked past them two or three times one of them cried: Come and sit by us, bonny boy. For what would I sit beside you? said I. We'll tell thee that when thou'rt by us, she answered. So I went to them, and the one nearest to me (for I didn't dare to sit between them) said: Thou'rt a harper? I said: Yes; wouldst hear me play? And both being of the same mind to hear me, I unslung my harp and began to play. But I hadn't been playing very long before one of the girls rose up and said she must go home to her dinner, and the girl I was left with being more polite, said she would tell me all the stories I needed, but that she, too, would have to be getting her dinner. And, fearing to lose her, I said: I will pay money to hear some stories from thee, and she answered: Come back home with me and I'll share my dinner with thee and tell thee all the stories I know. When we had had dinner, she said: Now I'll tell thee a story. I waited for the story, but instead of the story she began to untie her smock, and afraid she might step out of it, I said: Thou canst tell me a story with thy smock on as well as off. Thou'rt putting a

joke upon me, said she, but I'm not simple as thou thinkest me. It was then I began to understand that the story she had promised to tell me was the sin we were to commit together, so I handed her my two pence and got out of the house, giving thanks to God for his grace which had kept me from sin. But no sooner was I in the street than I began to think it over, asking myself if it was the grace of God or the punk's ugliness that had kept me in the straight path. It may be that your honour can tell me. The wench seemed no wise ugly to thee, Tadhg, whilst sitting with her in the sun? Not till she began to untie her smock, your honour; and I remember to this day saying to myself: What an ugly thing a woman is! But thou hast turned from that belief. France has helped thee to see beauty in women—how much rounder their forms are than a boy's. I should have said that a boy was rounder than a woman, your honour. There is no truth, said Ulick; we know the world through our senses, but as soon as the knowledge that our senses impart enters the mind, it is distorted by what we have seen and heard, and most of all by what we have been taught. Thou hast allowed others to mould thee, Tadhg, but I have turned a deaf ear to all but the inward voice, saying: I am the guardian of God's own work and will bring back to him the self he gave forth, telling him on the Judgment Day that whilst gathering flowers with a woman or talking to her of the stars, I had no thought for stars or flowers but of what her worth might be were we locked in naked battle. Does the sight of men bring lustful thought to women? Tadhg asked. A question thou must put to the priest in thy next confession!

Again they rode on for a mile or more without speaking, and when silence began to weary Ulick he asked Tadhg to tell him of the temptations that had come to him in France. Said Tadhg: Even if the crow isn't hungry he isn't

satisfied, and if I wasn't in love I was curious, and the gleemen in whose company I often was whilst waiting for your honour spoke about love as if it were most wonderful. That from which all proceeds, and into which all returns, said Ulick. One day whilst resting at Blois on our way to Franchard, a gleeman in the tavern where we stayed told me that the taverner's wife was in love with me. Faith, it made me laugh! but in the night I said to myself: I'd like well to know what this thing is that all the men and all the women are talking about—this love. So when the taverner's wife raised her eyes to look at me— To look at thee, Tadhg? Women, your honour, can come to like all kinds of people, tall, handsome folk like yourself, and humble little folk like me. Thou speakest truth; so on with the tale! Well, to give her a chance of liking me better than she did, I asked her to teach me French, and every night I'd sit by her elbow learning the foreign tongue, picking up words here and there and learning to read out of an easy book. Till at last you fell in love with each other? Catherine didn't say much about love, and I had begun to think it all a make-believe when she said: My husband is not sleeping with me to-night; come and seek me in my bed. And curiosity getting the better of my dread of her husband, a tall, sallow, lean, bitter-eyed man, I went shaking into the room; and finding the bed I lay down and waited till a hairy leg put the thought into my mind that maybe I was in the wrong room, for this much I did know: that women are not supposed to be so hairy as men, and the leg that had touched me was more like the shank of a monkey than the proper limb of a man. I am in bed with her husband or with the Devil! said I to myself, and the thought had scarce got into my mind when he turned round; and finding that there was as hairy a leg as his own lying beside him, he leapt out of bed, and with his back against the door he bellowed: Now I'll see who thou art, and it will

be bad indeed for thee shouldst thou try to get past me! And knowing him to be a man who spoke the truth, I stayed in the bed till he had struck a light; and seeing me, he cried: Thou shalt have a lesson, thou furry knave, and one that will last thee for this time and the next. He searched about the room, and it wasn't long before he found his belt, and having found it he called upon me to bare my rump. . . . I had to keep to my bed for some days. And thou wouldst not see the doctor lest the truth should be known! I remember the taverner, a tall, gloomy man— An evil face, your honour, a very evil face. And how was it, Tadhg, that she sent thee into the wrong room? Or maybe, said Tadhg, she sent me to the right one and the mistake was mine; for I like not the thought that Catherine, who taught me French so gently and sweetly in the evening, could play so cruel a trick upon me in the night. Indeed, she wished me to believe that she would recompense me for the beating I had gotten. And what didst thou say to that, Tadhg? I said: Love must be a great thing indeed if it makes good the pain I have suffered; and she answered: Surely it will, and thou shalt not be asked to go into a dark room again; I'll take thee bathing with me. So thy last love adventure, Tadhg, was in a river? Her husband didn't leave Blois, or we left Blois before her husband, and it was on our return that she led me to the river through the garden, not knowing there was a wasp's nest at the end of it; and so many were the stings I got that the doctor said a sting or two more would have had my life.

Worse luck than thine never came to a lover, Tadhg. Worse luck, your honour! I have come to see it all now as the best of luck, for if I had strayed into her bed a big, round, fat, mortal sin, not a doubt of it, would have been committed, and then where should I be, and not an Irish priest within hundreds of miles to hear my confession? But a French priest, Tadhg, can shrive a man

as well as an Irish. He can shrive a Frenchman, for they talk the same language, but you couldn't expect him to shrive an Irishman with only a word of the French here and there. So I kept away from the French priests and put my trust in God himself that he'd keep me going and alive till the ship put in at Galway, and a wonderful peace it was that came over me when I fell on my knees before Father Carabine. One of these days you'll be finding out for yourself, your honour, that nothing lightens the heart like a good confession. But Tadhg, thy face is overcast. Hast sinned again? Last night— what of it? Faugh! The thought of the unseemly rumps brings the stomach up! No, I haven't sinned, and if my face be glum at times it is for the fear in my heart that our journey may end in a sin. But if I know thee, Tadhg, the wise woman was questioned, and she told thee— That in Ireland the weak overcome the strong, said Tadhg; 'tis a mysterious saying, surely. And did she tell thee that our quest was a holy hermit, or a lonely lady at her casement window? If I said it was a hermit— Say it, your honour, say it, and I'll be the happy man and the contented harper that I was when I returned from the priest in Galway shriven of my sin and as clean and holy as a new-born soul. Of what sin, Tadhg, did he shrive thee? I tried to make it plain to him that I wished to learn from the taverner's wife if the pleasures of love were all that the trouvères and troubadours said and sang. Tadhg, thou'rt fooling thyself; damn thy conscience! I will beg your honour not to damn my conscience, for without his conscience a man is but a stray. For my conscience sake, say if our quest is hermit or lady. Say, master, and I'll be gay, and we'll play our harps together on the banks of the Suck the way the Jews did long ago by the waters of Babylon. Tadhg, thou art a fool and I am weary of thee.

Master, didst thou hear it? I heard the caw of a

rook in the air. No rook, your honour, but a raven; watch him, he is going towards the Suck. His caw sounds strange overhead in the still air of the fall, Ulick answered; not another sound. As a dead house the country is. Whip up the greys. And the air being keen and the horses willing, they reached the Suck in half an hour, and failing to find a ford, Ulick rode the mare into the river, Tadhg following with the pack-horse, who chose the deepest place to stop; neither backwards nor forwards could he be persuaded to move. Leave him, Tadhg; as soon as his blood begins to chill he'll follow the other horses; and they had not reached the end of the next field before the brute was after them. Now, Tadhg, tell me the meaning that the wise woman put on an obstinate pack-horse. She put a queer meaning on the raven outside Dunmore, for it's well known that there's no luck for them that meet a raven, 'tis known well since the beginning of the wide world. And ever since meeting the raven, Tadhg, every stick and every stone, every hare and every rabbit, thou takest for an oracle. Thou hearest me? Of neither spells nor omens will I hear another word! But to meet a raven—Tadhg began, and Ulick's anger rising suddenly, he raised his whip to strike Tadhg. Strike me, master, strike me, for a blow will remind me that I am your servant—in this world we are master and servant. And it is well that the servant should be a good servant and the master a good master, Ulick said. And no servant ever found a better master than I have, Tadhg replied.

As they advanced eastward into Ireland they began to read in the fields the story of long wars. For war did not begin with the Scots in Ireland but with the Danes, said Ulick. And before the Danes, your honour. We need not look farther back than the Danes. After the Danes the Normans came, and we were followed by the Scots. And how many burnt steads have we seen,

Tadhg, on our way hither, and how many fields over-run by blackthorn and hazel? The field we are in shows but a few patches of grass; only a few more years are needed for it to be forest again. Very little of the great herds of Ireland remain; a few scattered cattle and a few sheep. But herds of deer we have met and herds of wild swine, and wolves and foxes are more numerous than men. As he spoke they came to a low-lying field with drains cut along and across, but reeds and briars had dammed the drains and the field was now nearly marsh despite the long drought. As soon as the rains begin it will be a lake! In the middle of the field was a clump of trees, and guessing it to conceal a spring-head they rode towards it, thinking to water their horses; but at their approach some five or six men and women, with a child or two, ran like wild animals into the woods and could not be brought back by kindly promises of help. Starvelings, living upon cress, said Tadhg. Living upon cress! Ulick repeated. At Dunmore there was talk, your honour, of the food the Scots had taken out of the country, destroying everything that they couldn't carry, leaving only the cress and the berries for people to live on, or— I could tell stories that would make your honour faint to hear. Well, then, don't tell them! and they rode on in silence till Tadhg said, pointing with his whip: The man that we last asked the way from said we'd find the Abbey of Ballintober in a scoop of the land, with grand trees about it, and cattle feeding. And now, Tadhg, what names shall we give? Your honour's name would have a greater sound than any other in the land. That may be, Tadhg, but I am not willing to give my name. For the night that we are here I am Roger d'Andeli, a trouvère, come to Ireland in search of Irish harps, and thou art my gleeman, Jean Bretel. But if a French monk, your honour, should be here and speak to me in French— Well, we shall be found out, that's all! Ulick

interrupted harshly. And now, Tadhg, listen. Thou hast put thyself between me and my will ever since we set out from Castle Carra, and I'll bear with it no longer but will strike hard across thy shoulders with my whip. Dost hear, Tadhg? Your honour knows that I would do everything and more for your sake. I am Jean Bretel, and will speak the best French I can— We speak French together, and to the monks I speak in Latin. Thou hast no Latin. A stickle of truth in a flood of falsehood! said Tadhg. Remember, no word of Irish from thee, Tadhg!

The lay brother, who had no Latin, cried to somebody within the porch for a scholar, and when the scholar brother came Ulick gave the name of Roger d'Andeli, a Norman trouvère. Tadhg would have gone to help the lay brother with the horses, but Ulick laid his hand on his arm lest in a moment of forgetfulness he should break into Irish. So he said to him in French: Come thou with me, Jean; the Abbot has sent word that he is willing to receive us. And as trouvère and gleeman journeying to gether to Athlone to buy harps, they were accepted by the Abbot without suspicion, Rambaud d'Orange's melody serving them for passport excellently well. The Abbot must needs hear it twice over, and after the second hearing he said: When you have gotten your harps it would be well for you to return quickly whence you have come, for a great battle will be fought in Ireland within the next few weeks. Ulick listened with due courtesy to his host, hearing from him the story of Earl de Burgo's imprisonment in Dublin and the Scots' retreat from Limerick with the loss of half their army, and of Bruce, who was still in the north preparing a march southward, But he will be met by Sir John Bermingham with a great army of thirty thousand men, said the Abbot, and it will be well for you to hasten to Atholne, for after the battle there will be parties of soldiers flying from the ranks of the Scotsmen, or perhaps from Bermingham's

ranks, and I would not have you fall into their hands. From the Scots you have most to fear, for if the Scottish army be defeated the Scots will scatter north and south and west and wander over Ireland plundering and killing without care or mercy, like men bereft of reason. But when will Bruce begin his march southward? Ulick asked. Our news from the north is that he is waiting for reinforcements from Scotland and mayhap will wait no longer, or he may wait a few weeks more. But the battle will be fought before the middle of October, so hasten to Athlone to buy your harps. Think not that I would bid you away; it is of your safety I am thinking. An early start in the morning I would press upon you. On these words the Abbot rose from his chair, and Tadhg, afraid that he might be dismissed without having obtained the Abbot's blessing, ran forward and threw himself on his knees and began to babble in French. He would have your blessing, my lord Abbot, Ulick said, and he followed Tadhg's example, saying as he rose from his knees: A servant's piety is as welcome in the sight of God as his master's, a remark that found such favour with the Abbot that Tadhg received a pat on the head. You may tell him, said the Abbot, I will remember him in my prayers; a promise that was not transmitted to Tadhg lest in his excitement he should break out into Irish. I will tell him, Ulick said to himself, to-morrow, when we are ten miles from Ballintober, but no sooner, lest an evil wind carry my words back to the Abbot.

A lay brother conducted them to their beds, Ulick saying to Tadhg: Rouse thyself betimes, for we should start before the Abbot leaves his bed. The Abbot is an old man and old men lie long abed, Tadhg replied. Sleep was upon them soon after, and next morning whilst waiting at the great door of the Abbey, Ulick said in French to Tadhg: Thy words last night were that old men lie abed—true words, and waiting for him our horses

are catching cold. The Abbot is out of his bed, cried a lay brother running towards them, and is dressing quickly so as not to keep you waiting. Whereupon Ulick asked for some horse cloths; but the Abbot arrived before them, and having thanked him and bidden him good-bye they walked their horses through the abbatial domain, it seeming to Ulick that to allow them to trot would show a lack of courtesy. How many miles are there between Ballintober and Roscommon? he asked after passing the gates. About ten, your honour. Well, let the horses trot and get warm, and we shall get warm with them. Tadhg woke up the pack-horse with a cut from his whip, and after a trot of three miles they reined up in front of Lough Ree, a long lake dotted with islands showing dimly through white mist; and riding along the old timbered road under scattered pines Ulick pointed to a shadowy form slinking through the rocks. A dog fox going to earth, said Tadhg, the first living shape we have seen since we started this morning; unless we count the spiders in their glittering snares woven between the door-posts of the barn. Flying from the light into the darkness the insects would go right into them. I'm thinking there's not many insects wiser than the spider. How far are we from Athlone? Ulick asked. I'd say no more than five miles, your honour; but the mare has cast a shoe, the off foreleg, and you'll have to ride the grey. Tadhg spoke of an old clout or hat to tie round the fetlock, but there being neither clout nor hat to be purchased or picked up on the road, Ulick returned to his thoughts, for in the long walk of an hour and a half he would be able to make up his mind whether he should tell Tadhg the story of the Princess Soracha or keep it from him till they reached Athlone; once across the bridge Tadhg would not be able to return without the password; but to trick his henchman by withholding the password jarred Ulick's sense of knightly honour, and the rather

as he was by no means sure that Tadhg's loyalty might not prevail in the end. It certainly would if he could persuade Tadhg that his love for the Princess Soracha was not different from the love with which God is loved in cloisters. But Tadhg could only understand what he had learnt in his youth, and he was afraid that as soon as Tadhg heard that they were on their way to a convent to release a nun from her vows of chastity, he would put his heels into his horse and leave him. Yet it was difficult to think of him deserting a De Burgo in the hour of his need. Moreover, Ulick was not certain that the tale he had been spinning in his head ever since they left the monastery might not prove as fatal to Tadhg as the glittering wheel he admired to the insects. For his tale to have a chance of catching Tadhg it must begin far away, and he could think of nothing more natural than to say: A desolate country thine is, unending wars and forays, murders, burnings, destruction, hard meat everywhere despite the splendid herds that stand knee-deep in succulent herbage, there being no cooking in Ireland. So my mother often said to me, Tadhg answered, and she was the last cook in Ireland, having been learnt by a Frenchman brought over from France. This lake frightens me, Tadhg—the loneliness, I mean. Hast no fear of this desolate country? Why should I fear my own country? said Tadhg. Hast no thought for France? Faith, I have at times; for the eating and the drinking in France, I'll give that in to you, is better than any we get here. Wine is better than mead and it's better than beer, and the first time I lay down between a pair of sheets I thought myself in heaven. And the omelettes, Tadhg! My mother was the last to make an omelette in Ireland, and she died without learning anybody. My father has a cook— Yes, your honour, a Frenchman, but my mother was the only Irish cook he would ever let nigh the castle. Well now, Tadhg, thinking of the sheets and the wine and

the omelettes and the many other good things that are in France, wouldst thou always remain by this desolate lake? I would, faith! and wouldn't it be strange if I didn't like the lakes and hills my forefathers looked upon thousands of years before I was born as well as your honour liked the Seine looping through the green valleys of Normandy, your forefathers being French? The most you can say is that there are three generations of Ireland in you, and these three generations were blotted out by your mother, who was a Frenchwoman. The truth is never far behind thee or in front of thee, Tadhg; it is more often than not up against thy elbow; and never was it nearer to thee than in the words thou hast just spoken. For when I saw Normandy for the first time I seemed to have known always the Seine looping and looping again through the green pasture lands with low hills, and the poplar trees showing against the sky at evening—yes, and the castles and their gardens, with marble-rimmed fountains. All these were familiar; France to me was like some dim before-time. If it had only been in dim before-times that your honour sang by the marble-rimmed fountains I shouldn't have had a sin at all to confess, said Tadhg. Now again, Tadhg, thou'rt thinking that it was thine accompaniments on the harp that led the ladies straying from strict paths. And their husbands out and away in Palestine fighting for the Holy Sepulchre, Tadhg answered. But no matter; the time that I've earned in purgatory for the accompaniments has been remitted by Father Carabine, and in Galway town. But thy confession did not save thee from joining friends and returning to the palace next day faint and pale. Well, my sins were forgiven me, and I've done my penance for the drink, saying Paternosters and Hail Marys and telling my beads, and I've given my share of candles to burn in the shrines and got me scapulas to wear and holy medals, and can go to

God and the Trinity itself certain I won't be kept in purgatory for long. Nor was that all. Before I left Father Carabine he made me vow that I'd never play the accompaniment to an ill song again, and it's as well your honour should know this, for it would go to my heart to refuse anything a De Burgo asked for.

But, Tadhg, thine ear is closed when I tell that there must be always a barrier between the lover and the beloved, and that the trouvère does no more than to love the lady in the castle as the monks and nuns in the cloister love the saints in heaven. Jaufre Rudel loved the Princess of Tripoli as a nun loves Christ, as a monk loves Mary, and so great was his love that it consumed him on his voyage to her. No man loves his mistress when he is by her as well as he does when he is away. Rambaud d'Orange never saw the Comtesse d'Urgel nor she him; to sing her praises was enough; hardships, sufferings, afflictions were borne by him cheerfully, for they helped him to appreciate his love. We must suffer if we would enjoy, Tadhg; martyrs and trouvères are alike in this. But in heaven, master, we shall love God better than on earth and he amongst us always. It may be, Tadhg, that the greatest saints will say: We miss the fever and the ecstasies of our convents and monasteries— And ask God to let them return to earth, master? Among the other questions which thou wilt put to Father Carabine, put this one. No need to put it, for I know well what Father Carabine's answer will be; he will say that no man should sing the praises of any wife but his own. Speak to him, Tadhg, of the need for a barrier, and of Bertran de Born, who was buried in the habit of a Cistercian monk. Folquet de Marseilles, too, repented his sins and was ordained a bishop. I am glad to hear it, and my prayer will be that the grace of God will come to your honour as it came to him. A great day for Ireland and for me, too, it will be when the mitre is put on

your head and the crosier in your hand, as they surely will be if you can only keep off the women; and it's for you to think it out, master, if the lady in the portrait is worth all you will have to pay for her in this world and the next. The lady towards whom we are riding is not a wife. How then did it come to pass that Roudier brought her picture over to France? I never liked that man, and if he wasn't a friend of your honour's I'd say— Say nothing, Tadhg! After drawing my father's portrait and the portraits of many others, his fame spread over Ireland, and King O'Melaghlin asked my father to send his craftsman to make drawings of himself and his three daughters. The three most beautiful women in Ireland, so I've always heard it said; and which is the one your honour is after? The two elder sisters are very beautiful, Ulick answered; the youngest is a nun— And not less beautiful in God's eyes, Tadhg said somewhat sententiously, irritating Ulick thereby. In my eyes, Tadhg, she is more beautiful than her sisters. But we are not chasing a nun, master, are we? She wishes to leave her convent. Faith, if she wishes that, I'll not waste another good thought about her! But how do you know that she wants to leave her convent if Roudier didn't tell you? I never liked the man, but I didn't think he was one to bring back from Ireland a pocketful of gold and an evil story. I can think of no sadder story, Tadhg, than a woman in a convent wishing to leave it. A story easily put right, Tadhg answered, if she'll go to her priest; and now that Advent is coming on, with fasting days and extra devotions, all thought of leaving the convent will flow away with her prayers. But we are not all alike, Tadhg. We have all got priests and the blessed sacraments to see us through, your honour. But, Tadhg, nothing is for long the same. A child's thoughts are not a girl's thoughts, and a girl's thoughts are not a woman's. We cannot do else, your honour, than to look upon our fellows as being much

the same as ourselves. Ever since your father put a harp into my hand I've been turning tunes, and before that again I used to be whistling for nobody to hear but the pigs in the sties. One big fellow would stand on his hind legs and grunt till I gave him another tune. Ah, I wept bitter tears when that pig went to the castle to be made into pork. Once more, Tadhg, I'd have thee remember that we are not all alike, and when we aren't alike we don't understand each other.

I would have thee look at her portrait, for it will persuade thee— I have no need to look at the picture, your honour, for a nun that would leave her convent and break her vows cannot be a holy woman; nor would I put any great faith in Philippe Roudier's stories. Dost think, Tadhg, that he invented the story? Well, he may have heard something like it, but it would have been better for him to have forgotten it—bringing it all this way, and for what, may I ask your honour, unless it be to come between the Mother Abbess and her nun, to bring a great unhappiness on the Princess for certain, for God would not let such a sin go unpunished, be sure of that. Roudier must have been doing scribbles of you and his stories must have turned her head. And how are we going to get her out of the convent—what am I thinking of? I am not thinking at all, and your honour isn't doing much thinking, for a convent isn't easy scaling; walls are high, and dogs and serving-men will come between you and the Princess. The Abbess will put her under lock and key, for no Abbess in the world would make over the King's daughter to you. There are windows, Tadhg, and pear trees grow by windows. Ah, so you're to climb a pear tree! O, master darling, let us go home, for this is a game that may cost the pair of us our lives. Tadhg, thou art easily frightened. Not for ourselves, not altogether, but as much for the poor creature herself, who'll have no home to go to when you're tired of her. She can't go back

to her father's court and her sisters, for King O'Melaghlin is a pious man of great repute, a founder of monasteries and convents, who is always saying his prayers and going to confession. I ask your honour, where would she go if she left the convent? And what will become of her if she remains in the convent, Tadhg? Bruce is in the north, about to set out to march upon Dublin, and Meath being handy his soldiers will spread over the country after the defeat of Bermingham— Bermingham won't be defeated, your honour. Bruce has won eighteen battles, and will take risks. Besides, the Scots are like ourselves, the same flesh and blood, and speaking our language, with only trifling differences. A victorious soldier has no God but his appetite, Tadhg. We cannot leave the Princess Soracha— No great matter, that, for won't she be one of the martyrs, getting a good place in heaven in reward for a bit of an indignity on earth? Leave her to the will of God, your honour, whatever it may be. Let us go back! I am frightened. I have followed thee from castle to castle, falling into great sins for love of thee and for love of thy family. But if I follow thee now—no, I cannot, master, I cannot! And he rode away like one who believes the Devil is in pursuit of him.

Ulick sat dumbfounded in the saddle. Now, what am I to do? A soldier hired in Athlone could hold the horses under her window, but he, too, might fail me and ride away with my secret. Her portrait was still in his tunic, and having looked on her face again, he said: It cannot be that I shall never see her. Soracha a soldier's booty! A clatter of hooves caused him to turn in his saddle. It is I, master, I've come back to beg you—To forgive thee? Ulick shouted, his passion leaping into flame. No, to whip me! cried Tadhg, for I shall be easier after I've had a stripe or two. Then take what thou asketh! and the lash of Ulick's whip flew out and smote Tadhg across the shoulders, ripping his tunic, again and again and once

again, six times in all, and Tadhg would have received a seventh blow if he had not cried out: Master, whip me no more lest I faint and be unable to follow thee to the end. And knee to knee they rode into the town of Athlone, Ulick upholding his servant.

CHAP. XLVIII.

NOW that you've got the heroes safe into Athlone I'm beginning to feel the want of my tea and shall be glad if your honour will excuse me the rest of the story till to-morrow. And my voice being tired, I was glad of the interruption and spoke to Alec of a cup of tea at the Lodge, it seeming to me that I must offer him some hospitality. I am in the way of taking my tea at Mulligan's, he answered, and you are in the way of taking yours at the Lodge, so we'll stick to our customs and be friends. But have you no fault to find, Alec, with the story so far as it's gone? Faith, I have, a fault and a half. We are mostly through the story without coming to a battle; not a word about the battle of Connor, nor of the eighteen battles that the great Bruce won in the south and that made up for the beating of Felim O'Conor at Athenry. My uncle used to talk a lot of that battle; he had it all in his eye; but he hadn't got your honour's words to tell of the poor fellows tumbling over dead, or limping off with an arrow in the thigh, with a horse shot through the nostrils screaming with pain, trampling on all in his mad way, poor beast. Sure it is as plain to me as if the battle was there in front of me: the cheering at every good shot, and the poor Irish coming on and on in their saffron tunics. The battle was fought in August when the days were long; and I can see the English coming down the hill in the afterglow, sticking and chopping about amid the blind and the lame. I'd like to have heard your honour tell of all that, but not a word, nor the wind

of one! Another thing is that you don't tell of the retreat of the Scots through snowstorms, with troops of starving wolves on their heels eating the dead, aye, and the dying, too. But, Alec, I'm not writing this history of the Bruces in Ireland. I know that, your honour, but I've been wondering if the history couldn't be mixed up in some such a way with the story that the reader wouldn't know which he was reading, but would just take it all in, and separate it all out, afterwards, in his mind. I have thought of all that, Alec, I answered with a sigh. Well, if your honour can't do it, no man can. One thing more I'd say. I'd have had Edward Bruce the hero of the story, for a finer captain never walked the world. I see, Alec, you'd have liked history better than a story; I'm sorry. It's like bread and butter—they are better together, and so I'd have liked both the history and the story. But perhaps your honour is right; maybe the two wouldn't mix. Well, to-morrow, by the old mill, you'll be telling me if he gets the nun or gets fooled. And then there's the battle of Dundalk and the big fight between Edward Bruce and Sir John Maupas. Once more, your honour: at the same time to-morrow.

And turning from him I watched the rooks coming home through the quiet sky, asking myself if Alec were right and if I should do better to write the story of Edward Bruce, for truly I would not find a doughtier champion in the *Iliad*.

CHAP. XLIX.

THE password, Edward of England, opened the gates to them, and the news of Sir Ulick de Burgo's arrival being brought quickly to Sir Roger Mandeville he hurried down the stairs of his house to meet Sir Ulick, who had just dismounted from his horse; and they talked for a while till coming across the courtyard for the second time Sir

Roger caught sight of Tadhg being held on his horse by a soldier. Your servant, said Sir Roger, seems in great pain. For a disobedience I lashed him too severely in a moment of anger, Ulick replied, and Sir Roger answered that in moments of anger we mete out the lash as we would not do if the punishment were postponed till the next day. We have, Sir Roger continued, an old woman here of great repute in the curing of wounds. Have no fear that your servant will not be able to proceed with you within a week. Let a message, he said, turning to the soldiers, be sent to Ann Gregan that she is to come at once to attend on a man who has been flogged. A soldier bent over Tadhg and said: Thy master didn't miss thee when he hit thee; faith, he has laid into thee cruelly. Not harder than I deserved, Tadhg answered. But a faint is coming over thee. Penfold, bring wine from the Governor's house else the man faints again. Courage, Tadhg, for in a little while thou'lt be easier; a cup of wine is a great help to one in pain. I know it, for I come from thy country, Tadhg answered. Ah! thou hast been in France? Tell us of France. I can think of nothing but my pain, said Tadhg; and after he had drunk some wine he was carried to a comfortable room, where they found the wise woman toasting a piece of linen before the fire. Tell me why the linen is burnt? said a soldier. 'Tis not burnt, she answered, 'tis but scorched. Burnt or scorched, why is it scorched? the soldier persisted. That is the way we have always done it, and our fathers before us, the old woman said. The soldier watched her, and she continued to scorch the linen, and when it was sufficiently burnt Tadhg's torn tunic was lifted from his back, and she said: The skin is only broken in two or three places. Shall I be well to-morrow? asked Tadhg. To-morrow and three weeks from to-morrow thou mayest be well enough to travel, and if thou'rt well then I shall deserve all the praise I get for curing thee. But the master will

be here with the horses to-morrow. The master will have to send the horses back to their stables, she answered.

He'll be sorry for the lashing he gave me, Tadhg said to himself, though I deserved it; and he continued to worry over the delay, confiding from time to time his trouble to Ann, saying that the lashing he had been given had wiped out his fault and would bring him back into his master's favour again if it weren't for the delay. In saying this much he roused Ann's curiosity and was forced to invent a story to satisfy her, and the story he put together in his feebleness was his failure to deliver letters entrusted to his care. Didst lose the letters, honey, or sell them to a spy of the Bruce's? I know naught of Bruce's spies, Tadhg answered; we have come from France. Come from France, my pulse! said the old woman; but thou'rt not a Norman and speakest good, kindly Irish. Not a Norman, truly, but a man from Galway am I, said Tadhg; and he escaped further questions by feigning a greater feebleness than was upon him. As the pain of his wounds dwindled he thought it well to mutter that they had come from France to buy harps, and would return to France if they could find the harps that suited them. Ann was not interested in harps or the buying of them, but she liked to hear of Ballintober and the Abbot, and was greedy for news of Brother Matthew, Brother Gregory, Brother John, Brother James, saying that they were young when she was a bare-legged girl running about the hen-house bringing in the eggs for them. But I've had my share of trouble, darling, and they have had little. Ah! it's the trouble that ages, and to thine eyes I look ten years older than they. Brother John's thoughts were always in the mead cask and the beer cask, but I wouldn't be repeating idle tales. And Brother Matthew—is he still mad about the east wind? A draught out of the east was an old dread of his. And the same dread lingers on, said Tadhg, who knew not

whether the monk was alive or dead, but was concerned to baffle the old woman's curiosity and persuade her that he would be able to travel at the end of the week. To which she answered: Haven't I said three weeks or four weeks, and I should know something about the healing of wounds, having done little else this many a year.

After the skelping your honour gave him he'll be a strong man if he can travel in three weeks from now, she answered Ulick when he came to inquire for his servant. He is in thy hands, Ann Gregan, and it is for thee to say when he will be fit to travel. Have I not said it, your honour—in three weeks? I wouldn't have thee speak to his honour like that, Ann Gregan, said Tadhg from the bed. Have a memory of who he is and what thou art. Well I know the who and the what of it, and I don't need thee to tell me, sonny man! Enough, enough, said Ulick; I would talk to my servant alone about the harps that we are in search of. I'm not standing on your tongue, she answered. He is in thy care, Ann Gregan, said Ulick, his temper rising up against her, and he shall not move from that bed till thou tellest him to rise. All that is thy right, and mine is to talk with my servant alone if it pleases me to do so. So now make thy curtsey and leave us. And when she had closed the door, Ulick took the stool beside the bed. Tadhg, he said, I fear I struck thee too sharply; but no man is always master of his temper. It took me suddenly—Just as it took me, master, when I rode away; and my temper going out as quickly as it came in, I rode back. Yes, Tadhg; and I lashed thee too harshly. I might have killed thee; another stroke would have done it. But I am alive, your honour; and whilst lying here things have been ripening in my mind and I understanding them better all the while, saying to myself: As likely as not we were brought from France, God not wishing the Princess Soracha to fall into the hands of Bruce's soldiery, a

Princess like her, daughter of a King that has done so much for God's people, for the nuns and the monks of Ireland. I came back to help my father, Tadhg. Would it be wrong for me to be thinking that we were brought back from France to help your father and to get King O'Melaghlin's daughter out of danger? We should get the whole convent out of danger, too, if we could, but we can't carry them all off; there wouldn't be room on the horses, however they clung about us. So thou thinkest, Tadhg, there was something in what I said? Faith, I do, your honour, and lying here I've had time to rue the delay, for the fault was mine. Not all thy fault, Tadhg; we both lost our heads. The news to-day is that Bruce's plan is to come out of the north somewhere about the middle of October, so there's plenty of time for thee to get well. And now tell me if the pain is dying out of thy back. Is it easier to-day than yesterday? It is easier, your honour, and I have often told Ann that a sore back shouldn't prevent a man from riding, but she gives no heed. I'll come to see thee to-morrow, Ulick answered, and every day he came to Tadhg's room to inquire the progress his henchman was making; and it was at the end of three weeks that they cried the password at the bridge-head, Edward of England, and rode into the forest.

Great bronze leaves fell through the branches, and acorns were heard falling on every side. A great year for acorns, said Tadhg to himself, the devil a better; and his thoughts went back to his pigs in Ardrahan and how they would have relished the great feast God had sent them. And now that Ulick was sure of his harper's loyalty, he gave himself wholly over to thoughts of Soracha. In this way each was enough to himself and many miles went by in silence. At last, turning in his saddle Ulick said: Thou'rt the most fortunate of men, Tadhg, knowing nothing of love's torment. An anguish

was mine at Athlone that I cannot tell, so great was it; and the sleepless nights! I shall never forget them, the same thoughts going round and round in my head. Had I been with you, master, I'd have played the harp and soothed you. Thou'rt a faithful harper, Tadhg, and to help me to bear uncomplainingly the loneliness of this ride tell me what passed between thee and the old woman. She spoke of the Abbot and his monks— Whom she said she knew? She knew them by name and by nick-name, and all their little ways were known to her, all their troubles. Then the monks suffer like myself! I wouldn't be saying that, your honour. She is a dirty old woman now, but one day she must have been different. She told me, Tadhg continued, that she had been loved thirty or forty years ago by a Norman, one of the Governors of Athlone, but he left her, for she could never keep away from the casks and the vats. And when he put her out of doors, she asked what his complaint of her was, saying: Has thy dinner ever been kept waiting? and if I drank too much wine it was not for love of wine but for love of thee. All the same, he put me out, and what I get from him now is the rent of one room to live in; that much he'll do for me to the end, he says. And thinking to cheer her, your honour, I answered: All ends are sad, and she said: True for you; all ends are sad till death comes—merciful death, he comes to us all. The old woman of Beare, Tadhg, tells that time was when she wore a new smock every day and that her arms were once wound about kings, arms so lean to-day that carrier boys would scorn them. The old Irish poem awakens sight of Ann Gregan, and I see her in my thoughts watching a herd of swine under these oaks, saying to herself: Every acorn has to drop, and I, that had fine days and nights with kings, drinking mead and wine by the light of shining candles, to-day drink whey water when I can get it, among shrivelled old hags. I see upon

my cloak long grey hairs, and the curled patch of my body is grey, too. The flood wave and the second ebb-tide have all come to me. I am the Old Woman of Athlone. The flood wave will not reach the silence of my kitchen; my companions of old time are all laid in darkness. O happy isle of the great sea which the flood reaches after the ebb! But I do not expect flood after ebb to come to me. There is scarce a little place to-day that I can recognise; all is on the ebb.

I think the old woman's story should be put to music, Tadhg. To my thinking, your honour, 'twould be waste of good music, that might better be used on a poem about a woman that led a chaste and holy life; for what has the old woman to tell us but that she was a sinful woman, whose arms once fondled kings and are now too ugly to tempt a young youth. So with what right does she complain, for isn't it always turn and turn about? She says, Tadhg, that every acorn has to drop, and here we are among dropping acorns! But why dost thou ride with thine eyes on the ground? It would seem that thou, who hast seen acorns in plenty, seest acorns for the first time. I keep my eyes on the acorns because they remind me of my pigs, and there's another reason, too. Surely the wood we are riding through is the wood of the three old women that were hanged. And what three were they? I have the story from Ann Gregan, your honour, and she has every tale that's going about Athlone at the tip of her tongue. It was a fearful crime they were hanged for, and it was Sir Roger Mandeville that gave the order for the jerking of them into the boughs above us. But I'd hear what the crime was. Well, 'twas such a crime that naught could have got them to do it but hunger itself. For the first week the hunger gnaws like a rat, but after the first week the pain dies, so it is said. But the crime, Tadhg! The Scots left nothing on the land, and Ann Gregan tells that the people lived on acorns and beech

nuts, and that when there were no more— But, Tadhg, the ground is thick with acorns! Well, I'm telling you what Ann Gregan said, that last year the people were digging up corpses and eating them; and this year, too, there's been digging for the newly-dead. Now, master, keep your eyes on the ground whilst I tell you about the three old women that were hanged; keep your eyes on the acorns, for the last ill and the worst one that can fall on a man is to see a corpse in the tree above him, unless indeed he can get a piece of the rope, for a bit of the rope that has hanged a man brings luck— Tadhg, get on with thy story! What were the old women hanged for? For building a fire in the corner of a field to entice little children to the warmth; and when they'd got a couple, or maybe three or four, they'd kill them and eat them, and what they couldn't eat they'd sell in Athlone for joints of pork. Many's the piece of Christian child that was eaten in Athlone last year—and that's according to Ann Gregan. The crops rotted— I have heard enough of the failure of last year's crops, Tadhg, and would like to get out of this wood, for I've no wish to see the three cannibals of Athlone. Well, we can't be far from them now, and I don't know whether we should go to the right or to the left to keep out of their way. The rooks are cawing yonder in the grove of oaks, calling on their comrades to come over to feed with them. Wouldst see the three danglers, Tadhg? No, your honour. Then let us think awhile. We have been riding now some hours, and should be nigh a ruined village. Isn't that what the sentry told us at the bridge-head? It was, your honour; we shouldn't be much out of the way of the village by now. He said we must keep by the south-east? He did, and that if there were no clouds in the sky the stars would guide us. We are too near the Shannon and would do well to seek higher ground. And it was soon after speaking these words that Tadhg said:

I think we have missed the way, for I see nothing that the sentry told us to look out for. The plain that he spoke of is missing, and why did he not tell us of that long stretch of wood? Maybe the plain is on the other side of it. And coming upon a track in the wood, they followed it in the hope that it would bring them into the open country. Tadhg was afraid to oppose his master, so neither could cast blame on the other when at midnight they found themselves in a darkness so deep that they dared not advance farther. We shall certainly be swept from our saddles by the branches! cried Ulick. The last tree nearly had me off, Tadhg answered; we must wait till the dawn. There is no dawn in October, Tadhg, till the sixth hour. Six hours from dawn! And if we were twenty-six, your honour, we must wait. If we dismount, said Ulick, our horses may escape from us. And if we ride back or forward, Tadhg answered, we may be left hanging out of a dead tree in an old wood. By what sense dost thou know the wood to be old? A smell of nettles and toadstools is a certain sign of age in a wood, master. I hear water trickling, said Ulick. Soft water, no good for drinking, Tadhg answered. At least we are out of shelter of the wind, Ulick replied. A bad scenting night, and that's lucky for us. Of what art thou thinking, Tadhg? Of wolves, master, that might leave us alone but would like to have a bit out of our horses. Was I wrong to speak of wolves? Ulick did not answer, and the misty hours of the October night went by in thoughts of how they might climb into the trees if they were attacked. The horses would stampede, of course, and some of the wolves might go after the horses. Against six wolves they might defend themselves; a bite, and a bad one, they would get, but if the wolf missed the throat he would be stabbed, and when two or three lay biting at their wounds on the ground and howling, their comrades would turn tail. If the wolves

were numerous they might all be eaten, but large packs were rare and there was no wind, as Tadhg had said. A bad scenting night, Tadhg. Let's thank God for that! Tadhg answered. And thinking the best thanks he could give would be to hold his tongue, wolves having ears as well as noses, Ulick kept silence, giving ear now and then to Tadhg, who continued to mutter under his breath. He is praying, Ulick said to himself, and praying seeming to him to be a good way of passing the time, he sought to remember the prayers his mother had taught him; and getting no relief from these memories he ran over in his mind all the songs he had sung in France, till he felt he could keep silent no longer, wolves or no wolves. Tadhg, I would have thee remember that if we sit on our horses all night we shall have to spend the day in this wood resting them. If the wolves come we won't have horses, were the words on Tadhg's lips, but his teeth chattered. The cold has taken the heart out of me, he said. I know not what answer to make, master.

In the high branches of the trees above them there was a great gathering of stars, and hearing from Tadhg that the stars retired into the sky at the approach of dawn, Ulick kept on looking up, and every time he looked he thought the stars were farther away than they were half an hour before. But Tadhg could see no difference; they were to his eyes still shining brightly. Again and again Ulick asked Tadhg to consult the stars, feeling certain they were dimmer. Not yet, your honour, not yet! And when Tadhg asked Sir Ulick to look up, saying: The stars are withering, Ulick had forgotten them in the great weariness of waiting, and advancing their horses deeper into the dell, they rode round a pool whence a rill issued, to flow away into hazel and blackthorn thickets. A likely place to find a hermit, said Tadhg. Ulick did not answer, and a moment after they heard a voice crying: O Christ, O Christ, hear me! O Christ,

O Christ, without sin! Tadhg began to cross himself. I cannot remain astride whilst a holy man raises his voice to Christ, he said, flinging himself out of his saddle. O Christ, O Christ, love me; sever me not from thy sweetness! I am thine and thine alone, time everlasting, world without end. And I am thine, too! cried Tadhg, on his knees; O Christ, love me! Christ, uphold me! Christ, save me!

On hearing the unexpected voice the hermit rose to his feet. We are travellers, said Tadhg, who lost ourselves in the wood before midnight. A great danger it was to both of you to cross this wood after nightfall. Because of the wolves, said Tadhg. We followed a track, said Ulick, till the track ended— A track made by wild swine, the hermit interjected, and among rocks like these a horse might break a leg. We had no knowledge of these rocks, your holiness, but were nearly swept from our saddles by branches. And the hermit remembering Tadhg's voice as the voice that had repeated the prayer to Christ after him, said: I heard thee lift thy voice to Christ, and now I read the divine comradeship in thy face. We are friends in Christ. Whence thou hast come and whither thou goest makes no difference; we are with Christ, and to be with Christ is enough. Our horses have stood under trees all night, said Ulick, our weight pressing upon them; they are weary and we would rest them. Awakening from his ecstasy slowly, the hermit asked why they had not dismounted. Tadhg answered that they had remained in their saddles, their horses being restless, as though they smelt a wolf. We would rest our horses, Tadhg continued, feed them and water them from the rill. All these things you can do, the hermit answered as he moved away to his praying-stone. We would loosen our horses' girths, Tadhg cried after him, if we were sure that none of the outcasts would descend upon them to kill and eat them. Loosen the girths, said the hermit; and feeling them-

selves to be safe, Ulick and Tadhg took the bits from the horses' jaws that they might feed more easily, and tethered them to stout trees against which they could lean if they did not choose to lie. We must lead the horses to the rill if we cannot find a bucket, your holiness. Thou'lt find a pail in my cell, said the hermit; and when each horse was watered all was silent in the glen save for the crunching of their great stony teeth in the nose-bags.

And 'tis our turn now for a bite and a sup, said Tadhg, and the morning being still raw all three went searching the dell for dry leaves and sticks; and on their return with great armfuls of fuel, the hermit lent his flint and steel, saying he would show them round Glen Bolcane whilst the fire was burning. But first taste the water that bubbles down this little ascent of rocks and tell me if any wine in France be sweeter. And they told him that though they had drunk much wine in France they could not say that any draught was sweeter than the water that bubbled among the rocks of Glen Bolcane. Nor in France nor elsewhere have you ever heard sweeter songs than are sung in the springtime in these groves. A blackbird whistles from yonder bough, and he would be the best singer of all if he could finish his song. The thrush sings a more broken song in the depths of the wood. And over the wood the grey lark sings trancedly. In this sheltered holly a wren built her nest; the young have gone, but here is the nest. Now make sure that your feet are planted safely, for I would show you the hazel trees above us; a better harvest this year than last. Come, give me your hands and I will help you. Hast ever seen, he said, turning to Ulick, boughs more weighted? See how the branches hang, inviting us to gather the delicious nuts. A little higher we shall find some blackthorns grafted by me; once they bore sloes, but henceforth my thorns will bear refreshing damsons. The eyes of God

are pleased to follow traces of man's hand in the wilderness, Ulick replied, and Tadhg, who was not accustomed to hear his master speak respectfully of God, asked himself why his honour did not always refrain from blasphemy. The man that does not believe in God may blaspheme, but why the one who does should curse and swear has often been a great puzzle to me. And he pondered on this problem of life till the hermit begged to be allowed to withdraw himself from the company whilst he ate his nuts and berries: All flesh being forbidden to me by my vows unless God sends it to me. But has not God sent thee flesh, good hermit? Ulick asked; he has sent us with it, and as all things come from God—No man can speak fairer than that, cried Tadhg. God sent you to me, the hermit answered, and your purposes and his are but one, all things coming from and returning to God; and unwilling to separate us he has sent us that little toddling creature, returning doubtless to his nest after a night's hunting of snails and beetles. The hermit's eyes are quicker than ours, Tadhg said: what has he gotten? I cannot tell, Ulick answered; but what he has gotten he has taken to the rill. And what can he be gathering from the pool—watercress? I saw none there. And they both wondered, their wonderment ceasing when the hermit returned plastering a hedgehog over with wet clay. He will be ready for eating in half an hour, the hermit said; and he went about the dell gathering more sticks, which sent up a merry crackling. Good hermit, if we share thy food thou must share ours, said Ulick. There are feast days in the year and we pray thee to count this as one. And coming to know each other as men do whilst partaking of food at the warmth of a fire in a wood, Ulick asked the hermit to tell why he had left the world of men to abide in Glen Bolcane. Because of the wickedness of men, which I could not stop, though I threw myself into the middle of the battle. But it may

be that I have done wrong, for to escape from reality we must go to it.

A deep saying this seemed to Tadhg, and in his search after the hermit's meaning he lost some of the story, and being anxious to hear it all he had to confess that his thoughts had been away. Whereupon the hermit began his story again, saying: In the country where we are now sitting at meat two kings once strove, each desiring to put the other under him, which they could not do, they being equally matched; and so the country was wasted between them and there was little food left, and it seeming likely that there would soon be none at all, a cleric was sought and he told the kings that there would be no peace till they had gathered their forces and given battle. And the word of God being made known to me in the night, I stepped forth into the front of the battle and cried to either host: The voice of God spoke to me last night in my sleep, and his will is that the Lord's people shall come into the battle clothed in silk so that they may outshine all in pride and haughtiness. But God's words were not welcome to the hosts, and hearing myself cursed from both sides, I said: There is none in Ireland that will listen to God's voice! so I will go hence; and leaving them to God's mercy I crossed over to the land of the Saxons, where I met a man in Northumberland wandering seemingly like myself, without aim or direction. Who art thou? said I, wandering in this wild wood, knowing no direct line but straying hither and thither like a bird or beast; and he answered: I am a madman. Whereupon I said: We two are well met, for I am another madman, come from Erin; and he answered: Erin must be a good country, for the say in Ireland is that the Irish are all mad. Troth and faith! said I, thou hast heard no more than the truth, for none in Erin listens to the word of God. How then is it thou art mad? he asked, and I answered: I am mad from the curses they

cast upon me when I stepped forth into the battle and told them it was God's will that his people should fight in silk. And thou didst speak well, he answered me, for when chiefs war one against the other, their wars should be proclaimed to all the world. And then the madman told me his story, which was at variance with mine, for it was not with hosts and chieftains his quarrel was but with a cleric, who put a great curse upon him and bade him wander, for he had given way to anger against the cleric and flung his psalter into a lake. An otter returned it to the cleric next morning, he said, and ever since I have been an exile from Erin and have wandered unceasingly. So now since God has sent thee to me, let us count the trees as we wander, eating the berries and watercress when the Lord gives these to us, never failing to lie down under the same tree at night. Moreover, whosoever shall hear the cry of a heron from the blue waters of the lake, or the sharp, clear call of the cormorant, or the flight of a woodcock from a thicket, or the whistle of a plover on being startled out of his sleep, or the crack of a withered branch, or see the shadow of a bird as it flies over the wood, shall cry aloud: Brother, let us run quickly! So did he speak, and for a year we lived as he had said, never departing one from the other farther than a tree's space from tree; and at the end of the year Ealldhan, for that was his name, said: It is time that we part, for the end of my life has come and I must go to the place where I am fated to meet death. And what is the death that awaits thee, friend and comrade? I asked. I am going now to Eas Dubhthaigh, he answered, and a great wind will blow under me and I shall be swept into the waterfall and drowned therein; and afterwards I shall be buried in a holy churchyard and shall go to heaven. And that will be the end of my life. And was thy comrade drowned in the waterfall? Ulick asked. He was; and after hearing of his death I re-

turned hither and have lived here ever since, and here I shall live till a voice speaks within me and bids me go to meet my death. And what death will come to thee, hermit? I shall be killed by a cow's horn, the hermit answered. A strange death, truly! All deaths are strange, said the hermit, in our eyes, and all are simple in the eyes of God.

The hermit foretold many wars and betrayals, flights, massacres, and the overturning of all the rights of men and all the laws of God, his converse ending with these words: So I shall not be sorry when I go to the cow's horn to be killed and find the recompense of my life on earth in heaven, for of sins I am free, having repented mine. The voice in which he spoke these last words made known to Ulick that the hermit would now be left to his devotions, and he said: Good hermit, we will ask a prayer from thee. A prayer I will give thee for the success of thine errand, the hermit answered, and he turned to leave them. But, good hermit, thou has not yet pointed out the path that leads out of this wood. We came hither in darkness, and thou wouldst not have us leave it in the same darkness, not knowing the north from the south or the east from the west? I would not have you wander without direction, said the hermit, finding your way into the very heart of the wood instead of out of it, the twilight overtaking you and after the twilight night; and lest this misfortune should overtake you, we will walk together, following a path that leads to a clearing, and after that the trees grow thinner. Our way, Ulick said, is to King O'Melaghlin's court. A long ride, the hermit answered. After riding ten miles you will come upon the Abbey of Durrow in the midst of a park or chase with a great wall round it; you will pass it by and ride eight more miles, and then follow the shores of the lake.

CHAP. L.

NOW, isn't he the wise man and the happy man, said Tadhg, for there being no good diet in berries every one he puts into his mouth raises him higher up in heaven. Without beer or ale cask, or harp, Tadhg continued, to help the afternoons away! Tell me, Tadhg, wouldst thou lay aside thy harp for a promise that in heaven thy playing would equal the angel Gabriel's? My faith, and my troth! I would snap the harp across my knee this very minute for a promise like that. But if after playing, and thy playing being judged equal to Gabriel's, an angel should say: So well hast thou played, Tadhg, that thy reward is to hear our great harp-players, those whose craft is much above Gabriel's—wouldst thou not rue the breaking of the harp on thy back? I have always heard, master, that there is none above Gabriel in heaven. Thy mind is but clerical hearsay, Ulick answered, and fell back into thoughts of Soracha, some miles going by in silence, till suspicious that Tadhg was thinking of the Princess, he snapped out: Of what art thou thinking?

Of what you will do with the Princess Soracha if you should get her, your honour. Have I not told thee, Tadhg, that I love the Princess Soracha? Have I not heard that story many times before, master? They went back to their husbands in the end. But here there is no husband to go back to. The Princess Soracha is Christ's bride, and if she leave her convent she will leave it for ever, though she be King O'Melaghlin's daughter, for King O'Melaghlin is a holy man and will say: Her broken vows and sins undo the blood bond, and there's no telling what mischiefs may follow after. And the Abbess, too, will say: She is no spiritual daughter of mine any longer, and so the Princess— I would have thee cease thy chatter, Tadhg, for it comes not out of any understanding of what I have told thee. But neither have

you seen nor heard the Princess Soracha, Tadhg answered unabashed, saying to himself: He will not dare to strike me again, for to do so would lose him the Princess; and encouraged by this thought he added: Maybe a big surprise awaits you at the convent, master. If the Princess Soracha be such a weighty woman that the rope breaks when she is let down from the window—what then? Roudier is a skilful craftsman, Ulick answered, and would not have drawn a slender woman if she were bulky. Nor sent you to an ugly bosom, said Tadhg, nor to a woman with no bosom at all, one that you'd turn out of the bed; for the bosom, it would seem, is a great delight if I am to believe all I hear in the castle yard. But small, heavy or light, drooping or swelling—I am no judge, all bosoms being the same to me and through no fault of my own, for I was born that way by the will of God. Have I not said, Tadhg, that a man in love raises his thoughts to the beloved one as monks and nuns in the cloister— But you said, master, that there must always be a barrier. Tadhg, thou wilt never understand, so leave me to my thoughts of the Princess Soracha and respect them as thou wouldst the exaltations of the monk in the cold moonlight, his bodily knees afflicted by the stone floor and his soul barely breathing, so pure is his ecstasy in the bosom of a saint in paradise.

What can I do to save him? Tadhg whispered, hardly able to keep his seat on his horse but keeping it for dread of his master's whip, and so they jogged on, coming at last upon the great wall of which the hermit had spoken. A great wall it is, surely, said Tadhg, and our horses not having wings we must seek a gate or a gap. The mare will take a big jump, but the other horses might not care to follow her. I'm thinking we'd do well to wait for the rising of the moon, your honour, and she looks like rising up into a fair space of sky. And the words were hardly out of his mouth when they came upon

a gate; but it was chained, and whilst Ulick shook it, thinking that they ought to have foreseen the gate and brought a file with them, Tadhg cried to him that a tree had fallen across the wall, leaving behind it a grand gap, one that the horses could cross easily when the loose stones were removed. The mare faced the pile bravely, but the pack-horse hung back, and to get him over Tadhg flung the leading-rein to Ulick and applied the whip so sharply to the brute's quarters that to escape from it he stumbled over the heap, and so clumsily that he would have unseated any but a skilful rider. And nuns not being usually skilful riders Ulick kept Tadhg throwing stones aside to the right and to the left till there was a gap for the horses to gallop through if needs be. There must be no delay in getting out of this chase, Tadhg, and to find the track to the convent we would do well to seek it from the gate. I will lead the pack-horse and do thou walk slowly in front, thine eyes bent upon the ground. I will, your honour, Tadhg answered, and he followed the track till he lost it in a hollow filled with bracken. Keep your patience, he said, I'll find it again when the moon comes up. And when the moon cleared a belt of clouds her light showed a track against the brow of a hill. The same track or another? asked Ulick. The same track, Tadhg answered, for I can feel the ruts in the bracken under my feet. Since we are sure of the track, Tadhg, mount thy horse again. Will your honour hold him till I get my foot in the stirrup, for he's seventeen hands high and I am but a little man. A great wild place surely the nuns have chosen to come to live in, Tadhg continued, and we'd better keep to the left of yon thorn tree. Which thorn tree? Ulick asked, and Tadhg replied: The one atop of the hillock. But which hillock? The chase is all hillocks and hollows. The nearest thorn tree to us, your honour; and they rode on seeking the convent wall. The convent can't be much farther,

Tadhg said at last; either there is or there isn't a convent in this chase. Either there is or there isn't! Ulick repeated, and he asked Tadhg what he meant. But what matters his meaning? he said to himself, and they rode on in silence up a steep acclivity, expecting to find the convent when they reached the top. But so elusive was the park or chase that they distinguished only vague forms of trees and a glint of water. We shall have to cross that belt of trees or ride round it, said Tadhg. We had better keep to the path, Ulick answered, and pushing on through the trees they found themselves in front of a crescent-shapen piece of water. We shall do well, Tadhg, to hold our tongues. The cries of the water-fowl may warn the nuns that there are strangers in the park. Your honour is right, for beyond the lake between the trees I see a long curving wall some twenty feet high, or what seems to be like one. The convent it is surely, said Ulick, and as Tadhg did not answer him he pointed to an arched doorway with two small round towers beside it. And to be certain that it is no chieftain's castle, Tadhg, raise thine eyes to the square tower of the church amid glimpses of steep roofs. We came by some old disused track; the main entrance to the convent is on the other side of the chase. And it was our luck to have come in by the gap, Tadhg answered, for had we come in by the front gate we might have met with servants and porters. We might indeed, Ulick answered, and I am glad there are no horses feeding about here, for they would set our horses neighing. There is a pear tree reaching to her window; hold the mare whilst I seek it. I pray God, said Tadhg to himself, that we may get away from this place with our lives. . . . Yes, there is a pear tree. I will climb to her window. But no light shows, your honour! Did I not tell thee that her words to Roudier were that she lights a taper every evening? You said that, Tadhg answered. Can it be then that she has skipped an evening or fallen

asleep before lighting the taper? I will climb to her window— Do not do that, your honour, lest she be sleeping in another room. At last thou speakest sense, Tadhg; I will be patient. Hearken—that doleful cry far away down the horizon! Only an owl hunting, your honour. Tell me if owls hunt in the dusk or in the dark. In both, your honour. If the cry be an owl's then an owl is a doleful bird indeed. Did it not sound to thee like a soul's cry, a soul lost between heaven and hell? It could not sound to me like a soul crying between heaven and hell, for I have never heard a soul cry. Then thou hast no ear for thine own, Tadhg, which is always crying. But forget thy soul and tell me if the moon coming over the park's rim is not like a great yellow owl; it is marked like an owl. Owls white and grey I have seen, master, but never a yellow owl, and the markings have always been upon the moon without any man knowing whence they came or how. What hearest thou, Tadhg? I hear a stag braying, master, which is not to be wondered at, we being in the rutting month, the hind coming to the stag and the stag going to the hind. Tadhg, my hind does not come to me. Her window is dark. Canst tell me why? I cannot, master. Then I will watch her window from the other side.

Why should I know Soracha's soul when I do not know my own, which he says is always whining? Horses' hooves sound loud in the night; we should have muffled them. Should a wandering scent come by and set the horses neighing, we are undone; all the convent will be out of bed—a hubbub-boo of women's voices, with the chaplain calling them on! The master has no thought for these dangers. I have seen him in states before now, but never in such a one as this. Up and down he goes, like the madmen in the woods, railing against me for not being able to say why Soracha has forgotten to light her taper. Of what can he be thinking, my poor master,

ranging up and down the lawn, along and across, saying, no doubt, that he will drown himself in the Shannon because his love goes deeper than his senses, saying that he loves Soracha as the saints love God in the cloister. And now he crosses the lawn to ask me once more why Soracha hasn't lighted her taper, and I must find an answer somehow that will keep him quiet for a few minutes.

I have been thinking, master, and it has come to my mind that nuns confess to the Mother Abbess. Confess to the Mother Abbess! The Mother Abbess cannot shrive them. She cannot forgive sins, Tadhg answered, but she can hear confessions, and I'm thinking the Princess Soracha may have confessed to putting a lighted taper in her window. Has your honour forgotten the words of the wise woman in Dunmore, that in Ireland the weak prevail? She said that, Tadhg, but she should have said it is the weak that pray, and thou hast been praying ever since we left the hermit's glen that God might put out his hand to save his handmaiden. I charge thee to swear before God thou hast not prayed that Soracha should be saved from love. Master, I remember no such prayer, and if she is not in her room to-night it must be a forgetfulness on her part. Thy prayers have come between me and her. Now none can help us but the Devil, so down upon thy knees, Tadhg! My good master, I cannot pray to the Devil; my good master— By God, thou shalt pray to the Devil! On thy knees, on thy knees! I know not how to pray to the Devil; I have no prayer, master. My soul, good Devil, I will give thee, if thou'lt bring Soracha to my master's bed. Say those words and none other, else I strangle thee! I cannot sell my soul to the Devil. The Devil wouldn't take my soul; it isn't worth his trouble. Master, take thy hand from my throat else I choke. My soul, good Devil—dost hear me? Master, the taper! the taper! Then take at once

the nosebags from the horses and give me the rope whereby I shall let her down from the window; coil it round me that it may not hinder me in my climbing. Speak no word, master, till thou art over the sill in the nun's room, and speak not loud when thou art with her, for the walls are thin between the cells, so I have often heard. . . . Now, what did I hear? So my trouvère has come at last! Those very words I heard; and resting his knee on the sill he clambers into the nun's room. Now they are in each other's arms, and if she drag him into her bed they may lie till the matins bell is struck. None can help them save God himself, and may his help come speedily before sleep overcomes them.

O dear Lord Christ, Tadhg continued, falling on his knees, I have turned often to thee to ask thy help that my faith in thee may increase and that when the time is by for me to come before thee for judgment I shall not be hurled by thee into everlasting torment but raised up by thy power to heaven and given a harp grander than any Donogh O'Brien has ever made, to play upon with fingers more skilful than any fleshly fingers, even those of Finn Lorcan. But this night I ask not anything for myself but that thou shalt put forth thy power and save my dear lord and master, Ulick de Burgo, a sinner, from the Devil, who will try to snare him into Soracha's bed and keep him there till the holy nuns assemble and be witnesses to the sin unknown in Ireland since the pagan Danes were driven out.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, thou that sittest in heaven by Mary, thy mother, heed my prayer and give my master time to repent the sin he is now committing. And thou, O Mary Mother, in whose womb Christ was a guest three times three months, add thy great prayer to my poor one that Christ may forgive my dear master and the virgin in yon room the sin they have committed, and that strength may be given to them both to stay from

sinning a second time. Strengthen the spirit whilst the flesh is weak, for with thy strength he will be stronger than any king in Ireland, stronger than Richard de Burgo, his father, stronger than the King of France, stronger that Nebuchadnezzar in the far off time, or any king that has reigned on earth. Give him the faith in thee which he has lost, for if he have faith the sorrow of this life which he strives to quench in sin will be banished from him and he will walk joyous as the earth in the spring.

He walked between the horses and the window, lifting his soul to Christ in whatever words came to him, and it was not till he had crossed the lawn for the third time that Soracha's suddenly litten window engaged his eyes and thoughts. They'll be coming down the tree before I have the nosebags off the horses! Unloose the rope from her, Tadhg, and put her on the pack-horse. And descending quickly Ulick was on the mare in a trice. Get thee on thy horse, he cried. But Tadhg had forgotten to lengthen the stirrup leather at the gate and could only touch the iron with his toe, and whilst hopping, striving to pull himself up by the mane, a stag came belling out of the shadow of the pines, causing the grey to rear. To save himself from being gored Tadhg grasped the antlers, and the horse finding himself free galloped away, leaving Tadhg to the tussle. Sometimes the stag brought Tadhg to his knees, and sometimes Tadhg brought down the stag; and being equally matched, neither gave way to the other till Tadhg loosed his hold on one antler, thinking he would get an advantage by putting both hands on to one. A mistake he soon perceived this to be, for so violently did the stag wrench his head from side to side that he almost succeeded in freeing himself from Tadhg's grasp. But Tadhg getting hold of the other antler again, it behooved the stag to try a new trick: he began backing towards the wood. I shall be killed if he

gets me among the pines, said Tadhg, and it might be as well for me to shout for help whilst there is yet time, his honour and the Princess being well through the gap by now. So with the stag pulling him into the wood, he did not cease to shout till sisters Ethna and Oona came running down the sward in their night clothes, followed by Sister Muirgil.

My last strength is spent, good ladies, and if you had not come to my help I should have been gored. Take Brian by one horn, Ethna, and I'll take the other, said Oona. I thank you, ladies, for your help, and now—Stir not, or we will loose the stag! Do not if you would hear my story; and Tadhg fell to telling everything that came into his head, never troubling to join up one story with another but just stopping now and then to say: I am afraid you won't understand, good ladies, unless I tell you that . . . And the nuns heard a great deal of France and the troubadours and about harp-playing and the making of harps, till at last Muirgil said: But all these stories do not tell us why thou'rt here. You shall hear that, good ladies; but keep a firm hold on the stag. I am but a servant, and in coming here was doing no more than my master's bidding. We know not thy master's name, said Muirgil. My master is by this time far from here, and to give you his name, good ladies, would not help you to get back what you have lost. What we have lost! exclaimed Ethna. Our stag was able to defend himself against thee— By the Blessed Virgin I swear to you, noble ladies, that it was not in search of a stag we came but of a hind. In search of a hind? cried Oona; now we know why Brian is so fierce. Thy hind shall not be taken from thee—thou hast too few. So thou camest to eat Brian's hind! I did not come to eat, Tadhg answered ruefully. But thy master? No, it was not for eating he came but for love. For love? said Ethna. Look this way! cried Oona; Brian fights

with us. Loose not his horns, good ladies, for he would gore me. Let us hear thy story, said Muirgil. Good ladies, I am trying to tell my story, but you do not seem to understand it; nor is it your fault, nor yet my fault, but the stag's fault, for no man can tell a story whilst a stag like your Brian with his spiked horns is fretting to be at him. Brian cannot escape from our hands, said Ethna, so tell thy story. Well, ladies, I did not seek to drive him from his hind, nor did I come to make venison of his hind or of himself. I came hither at my master's bidding, a great Irish chieftain, one who has been all the world over and come back from his travelling; and I could tell you a fine tale of his travels in France with the troubadours— We would hear the tale of France and the troubadours another time, interrupted Muirgil. Did you enter by the gate? But the gate is locked, cried Oona; I locked it myself. I was with Sister Oona when the gate was locked, said Ethna. A big wind cast a tree across the wall, breaking a large gap in it, and it was through the gap we came, good ladies, said Tadhg; and to save himself from further questions he asked the sisters for the names of the two nuns now running towards them from the convent. The nuns, said Muirgil, are Sister Sheela and Sister Dervorgilla. And they, too, would like to hear my story, cried Tadhg; but I warn you, ladies, no fair story can be told of all my travelling whilst the stag is striving with you; just now he was on his hind legs, and the good lady on the far side had to loosen her hold of his horn. If there be a hind anywhere about, send the stag away to her, and then I shall be able to tell you a grand story about my master and myself. We would hear of thy master's hind, said Oona, and she called out to Sheela and Dervorgilla to bring bread for the stag. A slice of bread soaked in milk will tempt Brian away from the deer-stealer, whom he would gore. A deer-stealer in our park! cried Dervorgilla.

And the two nuns ran back to the convent and returned with bread. The milk jar is empty, but here is the bread; bread will tempt him. And the hind coming up from a covert close by received her share of bread and the twain trotted away together. I am no deer-stealer, said Tadhg, and now that you have your stag and your hind, let me go. We would have thy story; tell it or we will call back the stag, said Muirgil. We shall catch our death if we stand under the moon asking for stories, Sheela replied, and a little procession was formed, Sheela and Dervorgilla walking on either side of Tadhg, followed by Muirgil, Ethna and Oona. The story he tells of deer-stealing is not a true one, said Muirgil. Didn't he say that he and his master came after a hind? said Oona. But who is his master? Muirgil asked; I would know that, and why he rode away, coward-like, and I would know, too, whom he came to carry away. We are all here— No, Soracha is not here! cried Ethna. Can he have gone away with the King's daughter? Hush! said Muirgil, lest he should hear us. And they walked towards the convent, bringing Tadhg, a prisoner, to tell his story to the Mother Abbess. . . . Mother Abbess, said Muirgil, I would tell that Sheela was awakened from her sleep by cries. I jumped out of bed, said Sheela, and running to Oona's cell knocked at the door, saying: Come quickly, for somebody is in the park crying for help. Oona did not answer— I cried that I was out of bed, interrupted Oona, and begged thee to awaken Ethna. I was awake before either of you, said Ethna. Another time I'll hear your stories, answered the Mother Abbess. Speak, man; why art thou here? Explain!

We jumped our horses through a gap, madam, and came into the park, but not to steal the stag. For what came ye then? asked the Abbess. For one of the sisters, said Tadhg. For one of the sisters! repeated the Abbess. You asked for my story, madam, and I'd liefer bite off the end

of my tongue than tell a lie to a holy woman like yourself. The sin is the same, no matter to whom thou liest. Unless we lie to a priest in confession, Tadhg interjected. The Abbess frowned, and Tadhg continued: It was Sister Soracha. The Mother Abbess advanced towards Tadhg, her fist clenched; Tadhg retreated a step or two, and the Abbess recovering herself returned to her chair. Sister Soracha is King O'Melaghlin's daughter. Yes, said Tadhg, yes, I knew that, and begged my master to forgo his pleasure of her; but he wouldn't listen to me, and a servant has no will but his master's. And who is thy master? One of Ireland's chieftains, Tadhg answered. Thou liest! No chieftain in Ireland would come to rape a king's daughter. There was no rape, Mother Abbess. Philippe Roudier brought her portrait to France and a message, else Sir Ulick would— Sir Ulick? repeated the Mother Abbess, Sir Ulick de Burgo? And the affrighted Tadhg stood, his head hanging on his breast. Speak, said the Abbess, and speak truly. The Princess's message was: I am weary of my convent and burn a taper every night in my window, easily reached by a pear tree— Sister Muirgil, go to Sister Soracha's cell. If she be there, the Abbess continued, turning to Tadhg, thou dost deserve a whipping. You never spoke a truer word in all your life! Sir Ulick and myself came from France, whither we had gone to sing love songs, to join the army mustered to give battle to Bruce on his way to Dublin. And instead you came hither to commit a rape? There was no rape at all, madam, for wasn't it by her own wish the Princess was carried away?

The door opened and Sister Muirgil announced that Sister Soracha was not in her cell. And the rope thou carriest in thy hand? asked the Mother Abbess. Is the rope that let Sister Soracha down from the window, Muirgil answered. We know thy story now, said the Abbess, turning to Tadhg, and thou'lt be glad to hear that no

further questions will be put to thee; and there'll be no flogging for thee; thou'rt but a servant— And servants serve their masters, so I have always thought and felt, good Mother Abbess. I would speak with this man alone, said the Abbess, turning to the nuns; but as they were about to leave the room she added: No, it were better that you stayed and heard what I have to say to him. A great sin has been committed in the sight of God, and King O'Melaghlin being a God-fearing man will assemble an army and wage a great war that may last as long as the ten years' war of the Greeks against Troy. It would take as long as that to capture Castle Carra! said Tadhg, but without heeding him the Abbess continued: Another war, and the country will be a desert. The English rob us and drive us into the mountains and kill us as they kill mad dogs, and there is no law to save us. Another Trojan war! said Tadhg. Thou speakest like a fool. When my master told me we were going to release Princess Soracha from her vows— Release Princess Soracha from her vows! None but the Pope could do that. I turned my horse's head— And rode him back again since thou art here! said the Abbess. Let me take off my tunic and show you what the coming back cost me. Fellow, thou art in the presence of holy women! Three weeks I was in bed at Athlone— Button thy tunic; I am thinking it were better that he had killed thee. Isn't murder, madam, the biggest of all the sins? Our thoughts go beyond thy back and thy life to the Ireland that made us all, the Abbess replied. Dost think that King O'Melaghlin will bear in silence the wrong that has been done to him and the insult to the Church? The rape of Princess Soracha will stir up a new war between Meath and Connaught, and if thou wouldst save Ireland go hence and bring the Princess back to us. Go to thy master and tell him that if Ireland is not to be destroyed utterly he must bring back Soracha— Virgin or no? Tadhg asked. If she be re-

turned to us within a few days, within a week, within a month, perhaps King O'Melaghlin may know nothing of this rape. And now let us say a prayer altogether in this parlour; let us pray for Ireland, that she may be saved, for Ireland has made us all. . . . Tadhg fell on his knees and all the nuns fell on theirs, and they prayed for Ireland, and at the end of the prayer Tadhg said, rising to his feet: There must be no delay; I must go at once. By to-morrow's dusk I shall be in Athlone, where they are sure to rest for a day, and if I can come upon a good horse in Athlone I shall overtake them on the road to Roscommon. The man speaks well, said the Abbess, and her nuns seeming to agree with her, they accompanied Tadhg to the convent gate, and the last words he heard were that their prayers would not cease for his return. God grants prayers if it be for our good that he should grant them, Tadhg said to himself, and it must be surely for our good that Ireland should not be destroyed. She said that Ireland made us all; a hearty saying that is! and with Ireland in his mind always he walked like a man in a dream finding his way better than if he were trying to recall it or asking it from shepherds. His steps paused but once, and then only for a moment; for to confide Soracha's story to the hermit would delay him, and every moment was precious. So he hastened to Athlone, to hear that Sir Ulick and the men had come into the town, rested an hour, and gone away; and having enough money upon him he hired a horse, and was riding him hard up the old timbered road when a party of ten or a dozen men, with a pack-horse and a mule, gathered round him. We are looking for the Shannon, said one. Looking for the Shannon? Tadhg repeated. You are by the Shannon! We are by a lake and not by a river, said the man. And who may ye be and whence have ye come? Tadhg asked. We are of thine own kith and kin, and have come from the great fight at Faughart Hill. The

battle we have been talking about these many days! cried Tadhg; and which of them won, Bruce or Bermingham? The Normans had six to our one, but the battle did not begin to go their way till Sir John Maupas broke through our ranks and fought and killed Bruce, his own body falling dead over the body of our great chief. But we must not delay, cried another, telling stories of the battle; we are seeking the mouth of the Shannon. Then you have a long way to go, said Tadhg, and if you don't want to be caught by the Normans, leave the town of Athlone on your left hand. That is all I can tell you. The rest of this country is as unknown to me as it is to you. What carriest thou on thy back? My harp, to be sure. So thou art a harper? Aye, and a good one, a pupil of Finn Lorcan, of whom you have heard without doubt. Not a word do we know of Finn Lorcan. Well, said Tadhg, his vanity getting the better of him, you've heard of the great Earl de Burgo, and I am his harper. The harper of the Red Earl! was muttered. If that be so we will take thee to play for us on the voyage to Scotland, if we find a ship in the harbour; and thou'lt be held to ransom if we reach Scotland. But, honest men, decent men, let me go, for I'm carrying a message from the nuns of Durrow to Sir Ulick de Burgo, and must find him before he reaches his castle. We know nothing of these things and care little, said the leader of the gang, for we are hunted men, running for our lives. Come down from thy horse, and walk between these men, and obey them if thou wouldst not feel a spear in thy side. And now, march!

As no order had been given against speech, Tadhg said to his guards: I have come a long way; walk not so fast lest I fall. And his words coming to the ears of the captain, he said: We, too, have come a long way and are tired, but there is no time for halting till we step on board a ship. Don't blame me, captain, if I fall,

Tadhg answered; and the captain, remembering that a pike cannot rouse dead men and that a guide was needed, ordered him to be placed on the mule, already heavily burdened. We have brought with us all the food we fell in with on the march, and hope to find enough in Clare to last us into Scotland, if we should find a ship. And if there be no ship in the river? Tadhg asked the soldier. The hills or the woods for us then, till somebody hangs us out of a tree. But we shall find a ship. I hope that you may find one, said Tadhg, for you are fine men, and fine men are not fruit we like to meet with on forest trees. Might I ask whence you have come? We would be puzzled indeed to tell thee, for we know no more than that we fought at Faughart Hill, and finding our retreat northward cut off we tried the south. I would not be prying into your business, Tadhg continued, but if it's no harm I'd like to know how long you have been wandering. No harm at all, said the Scot on his left hand, a week come Sunday, losing our way in woods, up and down and around, till we could no longer tell the north from the south, the east from the west. So we are by the Shannon now? You are, faith, and a fine blue stream it is. Have you got a stream the like of that in Scotland? I am sure you have, and a bigger one, Tadhg added, afraid lest his question might anger the soldier. I cannot tell. Canst say, Wallace, if we have a bigger river in Scotland? I know not all the rivers in Scotland and therefore cannot say, but this Shannon is a fine one. A grand river, said Tadhg. An order came from the captain: Silence in the ranks! and turning to Tadhg, he said: Why didst thou not warn us of the village we are coming into? Have I not said, captain, that I know no more of the country hereabouts than you do yourselves? And the answer seeming good to the captain, he said: Half an hour do I give for the pillage, and no more. There'll be a few more families living on cress to-morrow! said

Tadhg to himself. And all the food of worth having been robbed from the village, Tadhg was ordered to step down from the mule and to walk with his guards; which he did, feigning an air of willingness to ingratiate himself with them. And with the same wish in his heart he called to the captain towards evening: Look between them trees, captain, and you'll see a big and handy ship, the very sort you are looking for; but I'm not saying that she's a Scotch ship. Whatever country she belongs to now, if she have not her share of men on board she will belong to us, for by the best of luck we have men with us here who can handle a ship. There's M'Pherson and M'Donald— Do not forget M'Tavish, cried another, for he knows every rope, and can take in a reef and pull an oar. And these words created a merriment amongst the wayworn men. Tadhg, thou hast quick eyes, said the captain; look now and tell us if there be men aboard. I see but one man, answered Tadhg; and others of the gang affirming that Tadhg saw well, the captain continued: Where the rest of the crew are we shall never know, for the wind is blowing fair. But how shall we get on board? one of the soldiers asked, and the captain answered: Hast thou no eyes to see the ship's dinghy? and the man stood abashed.

Work for us or swim, said the captain to the man in charge; and the breeze favouring them, they were soon a mile or two out at sea, voyaging north, turning inland when their food ran short to plunder first a Galway, then a Mayo, then a Sligo, then a Donegal village, and when the wind failed the men fell to rowing. Tadhg amongst the others had to take his turn at the oar, but his rowing was so feeble that he was sent to the prow to play his harp, the captain thinking that his fingers were of more use to them than his arms. Sometimes a single voice sang, sometimes the crew sang together in thirds, but they sang so tunelessly that Tadhg tried to help them with his

voice and his harp, escaping thereby from thoughts of his long imprisonment, from which there was no escape, so the captain told him. Thou'lt be kept in prison till a messenger arrives with money, and if no messenger arrives— The Earl will not see me languish in Scotland! Scotland is a fine country, said the captain. Maybe, said Tadhg, but in prison every country is the same. And every country is the same to a slave, the captain answered. At these words a great fear came over Tadhg, and for many a month in his Scottish prison he repeated: Every country is the same to a slave. Is it true that if no messenger comes I am to be sold? he asked his gaoler, and the gaoler answered: Better be a slave on a hillside than within walls. And slavery being then the only comfort he could look forward to, Tadhg's despair deepened every day, and the last blow was when the master he had been sold to took his harp from him, it being judged useless to one whose labour was henceforth to tend sheep on the Rhinns.

CHAP. LI.

ON the Rhinns! said Alec. And what might a Rhinn be? Before I tell about the Rhinns I must get a drink of water from the river; my throat is like a lime-kiln. The river water is soft, your honour; I'll run to the house, for there's a fine well at the bottom of the garden, with water as sweet as any in Connaught. I shook my head. Any water, I said, to quench this burning! And climbing down the little wall to the river's brim I tried for a place where I could kneel and get my mouth to the water without wetting myself. But the water went swirling by between big slippery stones, and when I returned to Alec my feet and trousers were wet, and he said: They'll think you've fallen into the river itself. And you didn't get the drink after all? Only a mouthful, I answered,

and that was enough. As I told your honour, the river comes down from the mountains through bog-land and the taste never leaves it after. You would have done better to let me run to the house. Thank you, Alec; but we have told enough story for to-day, and whilst we go towards the Lodge I'd hear if you like the story or if the convent disappoints you. We had some stories about convents a week ago, but no such convent as this one. And the stag, Alec? The stag is a rare bit, and you were lucky to get it from Timothy Moran. But why do you think that it was from Timothy Moran I got the fight? Isn't it just the thing that I'd make a story about myself? he answered. But I'm wondering what became of the two in Castle Carra, and I'm fairly bet, for now you are on the Rhinns and likely to stay there awhile, for all I can see, for you have got that misfortunate Tadhg into a sad mess, surely. All the same, you'll get back to the Castle Carra people, won't you? Tadhg'll meet Sir Ulick again? for without that meeting the story won't do at all. They must come face to face, and should it be that you tell the story another way— You won't want to hear any more of the story, Alec, is that it? That would be a harsh way of putting it, your honour. This much I'll tell you, Alec, that they do meet face to face. And Soracha—what becomes of the girl? You have asked me one question and I have answered it; ask me no more. Then to-morrow, your honour, we'll start off again, at the same time and under these same beech trees.

CHAP. LII.

YESTERDAY, Alec, I was telling that Tadhg followed his sheep up and down the great cliffs of the Rhinns. And if I should say my say about the same Tadhg, said Alec, I'd put it that he was one the dogs would pay little heed to; those wild sheep dogs will only work for a

stern and knowledgeable master. And there must have been eagles building in the cliffs; terrible birds they are, fierce birds and right hungry for lambs; and if they can't get a lamb, often enough they'll drive a sheep over the cliffs, knowing well that they'll find him on the beach broken up ready for picking. So they have done many times in Achill Isle till powder and shot got rid of them. It is easy to see, Alec, that you are a story-teller; you see into the heart of Tadhg as well as I do myself, and better, for what you knew in a single instant I took months to learn: that Tadhg was but an indifferent shepherd. What would he know of that trade? Alec answered. You will never make a handy shepherd out of a swineherd; if a man has the instinct of one animal he hasn't of the other. And you'll understand, Alec, that a great longing for Ireland being always in Tadhg's heart, his thoughts wandered often to the cliffs over the water and beyond them into the pleasing county of Galway, to the palace of the Earl, where he had played the harp to great companies assembled; or his thoughts would return to the long winding roads and the poplar avenues of Normandy. Rare moments of delight these were, to see himself in his thoughts riding by his master's side to a castle where a lady and her court awaited them. For a moment the past was reality; he was in the minstrels' gallery and his master sitting by the great lady's side in the banqueting hall, till the scream of an eagle awoke him. A sheep is over the cliff! he said, and to-night I'll get no sleep thinking of the lashing waiting for me in the morning, unless indeed the master's humour be changed from what it was last time; and the day was spent weaving excuses that might mitigate his punishment. But waste of time were his thinkings, for when the master heard that another sheep had been lost he was not in the harsh, flogging humour that Tadhg feared, and looking down on the pleading, grey-faced man the thought came

into his mind that it would be better to give him a harp than to send him back to his sheep—a thought that was quickly put out of his mind by another thought: that Tadhg might be sent to follow a flock of geese inland into quiet cloughs less frequented by eagles than the cliffs.

A good thought this was, for the geese proved more obedient to Tadhg's call than the dogs or the sheep, one goose indeed giving herself wholly up to him, separating herself from the flock, posting herself as a sentry on a hillock and whenever an eagle came sailing overhead calling to Tadhg to drive away the bird with his staff. After six months' service with his geese he earned some words of approbation from his master and returned to his flock determined that no eagle should get one of them; but he reckoned without his faithful ally. His goose died after two years, and after her death goose after goose was raped away to feed young birds on the rocks, and again the master became incensed against Tadhg. Thou hast worked well for two years and art now dropping back into dreams of a country that thou'lt never see again, of friends—if those who will not pay a ransom for a servant can be called friends! It was on Tadhg's lips to tell the master that his friends had not forgotten him, but it is better for a servant never to say nay to his master; so he hung his head and was bidden to return to his flock, with the warning that if another goose was lost he would be tied up again. And his back still bearing remembrances of floggings, he sat in his coign of rock so deep in his prayers that had an eagle come at that moment the bird would have gotten a goose for her young easily. Good Jesus, thou that knowest well the pain of a flogging, give me death instead. And as if God had heard his prayer, a goose separated herself from the flock and came to him, seeking caresses from his hand, uttering all the while such affectionate sounds that Tadhg believed the bird was sent to save him from lashes; nor

was he mistaken in this, for Maria posted herself on a hillock just as Annie had done. A bird's eyes are keener it would seem than a man's, and before the eagle was overhead Tadhg had time to gather the flock into safety and to tuck Maria under his arm; a beautiful white goose, to whom Tadhg became more attached than he was to Annie. Every day he owed his luck to Maria, and soon after he found on the beach a boat abandoned, or one that had drifted from some wrecked ship, and whilst making it watertight he often stopped in his work to think of what would happen to Maria if he left without her. Maria had saved him from many lashes, and he had saved her many times from having her throat cut, saying to his master: She is the sentry of the flock; choose another for the spit, but leave me Maria. All the same, he couldn't remain away from Sir Ulick and from Ireland, and he couldn't carry her down the steep rocks in the dusk. I should miss my footing, and we both would perish. It will be hard to steal away unbeknownst to her; she is always the first to awaken.

He continued his work on the boat, thinking always of Maria, eluding her at last by starting before the first stime of light. Maria has overslept herself, he said as he stumbled down the rocks in the dusk, bruising his shins, till about midway the descent became so perilous that he paused, daring no farther till the light strengthened. There's not a wind of any sort about, he said, and if the master should be up early and find me gone, he'll come down to the cliffs and send a boat with strong rowers after me and I shall be overtaken. And his back remembering the pain of the lashes it had received he was moved to begin the ascent again. But he lacked power to return, nor could he go forward, and the great fear that was upon him was dispelled only by the thought that it were better to be drowned in the sea than to be taken back and flogged. On a sudden resolve never to hear or feel

the lash again, he climbed through the last rocks, and barely had he pushed off from the beach when a wind curling from the Scotch coast filled his sail, and a bird flying heavily overhead fell exhausted into the water near to the boat. Maria, come after me! he muttered, and to save his beloved goose he dropped the sail, and Maria having enough strength to swim a little, he was able to lift her out of the water. Had she words she would tell me if the master is about; not much good would it do me to know whether he is or not—much better to raise the mainsail and get out to sea. With both sails set the boat made good progress towards the Irish shore, tilting over the ruffled sea, with Tadhg in the stern steering with one hand and with the other fondling the affectionate goose. If this wind lasts we shall be in Ireland in six hours, or two drowned corpses in the sea. Thou didst well not to delay thy flight longer, Maria, for it needed all the strength that love gave thee to reach my boat. No food have I, nor fresh water to give thee, but in a few hours thou'lt eat Irish grass, a riper green than any that grows on the Rhinns. And whilst the tired bird slept he was able to steer the boat out of sight of the watchers posted on the Scotch cliffs. But he did not reach the Irish coast without an adventure. He was suddenly caught in a swirl of waters, his boat bumping so roughly that he said to Maria: We shall drown together; and it was only by putting all his strength into the oars that he managed to pull the boat out of the great turbulence. Once out of it the sailing was pleasant and safe, and two or three hours afterwards he steered the boat into the quiet waters of a deep inlet. Above him the rocks were high and steep, and he had not the heart to leave Maria behind, though by doing so he would make sure of his own life.

On reaching the top he said: Maria, our way lies west for several days; afterwards we shall turn south. And

he trudged on, carrying Maria, who was still too tired to walk, too tired to pluck the sparse grass that grew in the desolate plains through which they were going. The spangled sunrise above them betokened rain, and its early promise was fulfilled about noon, a sharp, slanting rain falling on the still distant traveller coming towards them rapidly. In a few minutes Tadhg knew him to be a harper from his pack, and the man's first words were: Canst tell me, traveller, how far we are from the coast? No more than half a mile, Tadhg answered, and foreseeing some lengthy talk with the harper he let down Maria into what seemed to him a succulent patch, saying: Some slugs thou'lt find in this wet herbage; seek them whilst I talk with this honest man. A tame goose thou hast with thee! the stranger said, for every time Tadhg whistled to her she raised her head. Tame as a dog, said Tadhg, and he began Maria's story; but he had not got far into it when he saw that to end it he would need at least half an hour, and moreover it could have but little interest for a stranger hurrying to the coast. So he broke off abruptly. Thy gait coming up yon field told me that thy need was pressing. Great need I have, said the stranger, to get out of this country. And to tell that need would take as long as to tell the story of how I came to bring Maria with me across the strait. So thou hast come across the strait? Yes, and have left the boat that brought me over lying in an inlet, drawn up on the beach, with a sail and oars in it. So if thou'rt anything of a sailor and can bide for a fair wind, embark when the wind blows from the south, not before, for the tides are dangerous and a west wind would sweep thee into the great sea. So thou hast no further need of the boat? said the harper. None; I have been in Scotland for seven years and have returned to my own country, to leave her no more, if God bless me! Is it the truth thou'rt telling me? Why should a man trouble to tell

anything but the truth about a country that he left in a boat that came to him by chance? If that be so, thou wouldst not return to Scotland, where there may be moments of quiet for men to listen to harp-playing and poetry? For seven long years, Tadhg answered, I have been following flocks yonder over the wild moorlands and have not touched a harp. So thou, too, art a harper? In days gone by I was known for one. Then return with me, said the harper; put Ireland behind thee, the best country in the world to leave behind. Faith, Tadhg answered, thou'rt asking me more than I can do, for however bad Ireland may be in these times, my master is there; it is of him I have been thinking these seven years, and it is him that I have been seeking and shall go on seeking him till I find him or God takes me. I honour a man that can love his master as much as I honour a man that can love his servant, said the harper, so go thy way; and an hundred thanks to thee for the boat. A hundred welcomes, said Tadhg; but before leaving me, tell me what road will take me quickest to Mayo, for being a harper thou knowest the country, and I'd liefer put myself under thy guidance than another; for—

Say no more; thou'st given me the boat that will carry me out of Ireland, and I'll give thee the road that will take thee into it. Now, there be two roads thou mayest go to Mayo, by the north or the south of Lough Neagh, and though the north will take thee through a hard, rough country, I'd have thee travel by it rather than by the southern road, for that would lead thee through woods where wolves are plentiful, the shes outside the dens playing with the cubs and all eyes and ears for food. And if thou camest to no harm by the wolves, there would be lakes and marshes and mountains to cross, with only one ford, the one that Cuchulain fought by and killed Ferdia—being a harper thou knowest the story. So I would have thee take the northern road, for by this

road thou wilt be walking nearly due west, the sun always guiding thee. There will be the Bann to cross, a deep, swift current into which thou must not trust thyself. A ford thou wilt not find, but at this season the salmon are coming up from the sea and there will be men with nets and boats to take thee across. Belike, we may never meet again, but I wish thee a great discovery of thy master, wherever he be. And I wish thee, harper, a great discovery of glory in Scotland for thy harp playing. Were we not so pressed for time, and were not the clouds again gathering for rain, I'd hear thee play, for the sound of a harp I have not heard for seven years. We shall never see each other's faces again, said the harper, nor hear the sound of each other's harps. I have no harp, Tadhg answered; and if I had, this is no time for music. Keep to the right of the trees yonder and descend the rocks, but trust not thyself to the boat till the wind changes. On these words the men turned their backs one upon the other, but Tadhg had not taken many steps before he heard the harper crying: Thou'rt forgetting thy goose! Tadhg answered back: A goose is a clever bird and no hindrance to a man on a journey. She feeds herself and has wings to make up the distance if a patch of grass to her taste delays her. A waving of hands and they were swept apart. Tadhg plodded on, hoping that Maria had her eye upon him, nor was he disappointed. Not five hundred yards had he walked when he heard wings and Maria was beside him. But though Maria's wings bore her quickly to her master, thought is quicker, and Tadhg having in mind the onrush of a fox said: Naughty girl! naughty girl! thou shouldst not leave five hundred yards between me and thee. A fox might have taken thee by the neck and then I should have been alone in this world. And just as if the bird understood the reproof addressed to her, she followed close at his heels like a dog whilst they struggled through a landscape

drenched with winter rains in which a few old thorns were beginning to catch green. The wind moaned and the shower was blown aslant, and Tadhg thought of the harper, who in a little while would be finding the boat on the beach. If he puts forth, he said to himself, a gust of wind like this will fill the boat and he'll drown within a hundred yards of the shore. And it may be days before the weather changes; the longest winter, the bitterest I have ever known. Now, what did he tell me about Lough Neagh? That I was to walk due west, and due west I am walking, for the sun is coming down in front of me through a tangle of clouds.

A shepherd told him he was within a few days' journey of Lough Neagh, and allowed him to sleep in his sheeling that night, he and Maria together on a truss of straw, and next day they started again for Mayo. But webbed toes swim better than they walk, and the bird was heavy to carry. And thou'lt be a heavier load before we are in Mayo, said Tadhg; yet I would not be without thee. And he trudged on through a country of great bogs and high hills till he came to Lough Neagh, vanishing southward out of sight like a sea. A great lough, surely, and were it drained dry the waters of Lough Corrib, Lough Mask, and Lough Carra might be poured into it without filling it up again. But it's weary walking through bogs and hills with thee under my arm. Thou'rt hungry, my treasure; I'll wet a little of the bread that the shepherd gave me. The bird ate it from his hand, and having fed bethought herself that a bath would be welcome, and slid into the lough, drawing upon herself a flight of wild geese, bringing grief to Tadhg's heart. She'll find a gander, he said, and he'll beguile her; for the female creature, human kind or beast kind or bird kind, is easily deluded. I know them well! The wild geese will get the smell of my hands upon her and will leave her alone (or chase her away); and he was sorry for Maria, who

would be deprived for evermore of her kin. Belike thou wouldst be happier with me, and belike not. His thoughts seemed to be fighting one with the other, and unable to control them or to put any order or reason into them, he watched them flowing. Now, for what am I crying? he asked. For a goose that has gone after a gander? No, not altogether—for the way life had come to him; cruelly it had come, yet he had borne it and might have borne it a little longer on the Rhinns. But in his own country, by the side of a lake, with his strength failing, and far from his master, he felt that it would be better for him to lie down and die on this beach. All his strength was gone; he could bear his life no longer, and prayed that it might not be the will of God that he should go any farther. Why was he like this, and why was life so hard? he asked, and the storm that raged within him passed away as storms pass into the upper air, and he began to ask himself how it was that his life, that had begun so well, should have finished so badly. He had liked feeding his pigs in Ardrahan, and he was the happiest boy in Ireland when whistling to the great big fellow that had an ear for a tune and would put up his hooves on a rail of the sty to ask that it might be whistled for him all over again. He was sorry to leave his pigs when his mother sent a message saying that he was to come to the castle to wash dishes in the scullery. I shall be back in a few days, he had said to the big pig; thou'lt hear no more whistling till then. Little had he thought as he spoke these words of the good fortune that waited him in the Earl's palace; and a smile came into his sad grey face when he remembered that, whilst whistling in the scullery, all the servants had crowded round to hear him, angering his mother, who said: I have to get on with my dinner and thou art wasting my time and thine own with whistlings. Tadhg, thou shalt go back to the pigs! I will and willingly, mother, for the creatures like my

whistling. And I might have gone back on the morrow if the Earl, who was walking with his steward on the terrace, hadn't heard me. Now, who is that boy whistling? said the Earl to the steward, and the steward answered: The boy is Tadhg O'Dorachy, the cook's son, who came from Ardrahan to wash dishes in the scullery. He has an ear for music, said the Earl. I would speak with the boy.

At the remembrance of the moment when the steward clapped his hand on his shoulder and said: Come thou to the Earl, Tadhg forgot Maria and the lake before him and was again near to fainting, but through the dimness he heard the steward's voice saying: It's no lie I am telling thee; the Earl thinks thy whistling good. . . . And though I was next to naked, I came before the Earl, who said: Put clothes on him and clean him and bring him to me. I was told to whistle, but not a whistle was in me and I stood trembling, unable even to speak a word. Thou'rt frightened, said the Earl. Here is a harp; try to pick out on these strings the tune that I heard thee whistling. The harp took all fear out of my heart, and the sound of the strings as I touched them led me into the tune; and when I had found it out on the harp, he said: Thou shalt learn harp-playing, my boy, from Finn Lorcan, my harper, who is too old now to play but not too old to teach. And six months afterwards I was playing in the minstrels' gallery and a great assembly listening to me. Didn't the Red Hand of Ulster offer a great sum of money to the Earl for me? But the Earl wouldn't take money for his harper, for I was to teach his son, Ulick de Burgo. And when the good lady his mother died another great day was in store for me, for wasn't I chosen to take the young Earl, or him who should be the young Earl, to France and look after him? Now, isn't it the wonderful thing that a poor boy should be taken from the pigs at Ardrahan for no reason at all but

to be left stranded on the shores of this lake without strength or hope that he might ever see his dear master again? There's no sense, no reason, no anything, in this world. We are all unhappy, and perhaps my master is as unhappy as I am. Maria is still sporting with a gander, and if she will waste her time thus, let her waste it. I shall journey easier without her. He rose from the stone on which he was seated, but he had not walked far before Maria overtook him; and after travelling with her for a mile or more, he said: This must be the river the harper told me to look out for, the Bann and none other, and I might do worse than ask for a day's work from the fishers. Come, Maria, thou'rt tired, and wouldst rest a while in the lap of my arm. . . . If you should want a man to drag a net or pull an oar— Canst pull an oar? I can pull an oar as well as another, Tadhg answered. If thy work be as good as thy promises, thou shalt have a ten-pound fish for two days' work. But my goose, said Tadhg. She never lets me out of her sight, following me like a dog. Well, shut her in yon sheeling. She'll cry all day— There'll be none to hear her crying, the man answered. And when Tadhg had shut Maria into the sheeling he was told to take the bow oar and keep the boat steady in the current so that the spearmen might not miss the fish. And at the end of the next day Tadhg asked: Have I earned my fish? The fishers would have had him stop another day with them, but he went to the sheeling, and bringing back Maria with him he asked for his fish and a loaf of bread for Maria, which they gave him, saying: Thou wouldst do well to leave Maria with us; a goose is no companion for a long journey. A month of soft foods, the man continued, feeling Maria's breast— No, said Tadhg, I will not leave my goose to be eaten; she has followed me so far and she shall follow me to the end. I have come from Scotland in search of my master away in Connaught, and she has come with me. She

flew over the cliffs after my boat, and a bad day it would be when I'd leave her to be eaten by you. Well, it would not be good for us to come between a man and his luck, and if the bird be thy luck, care for her, for a man without his luck is a poor thing in this world. And that is the difference between this world and the next, said Tadhg; in the next world there's all the luck, and in this world there's little of it, if there's any at all. At which they laughed and returned to their fishing, leaving Tadhg and his goose to continue their journey, Tadhg searching amid his disjointed memories and the goose quacking from time to time to be carried.

So thou wouldst have me carry thee? Tadhg said at last, picking up the bird, and with his sleepy Maria tucked under his arm he pursued his way through the sullen end of a March day towards a grim wood that he had been told at the Bann to keep outside of, wolves and foxes abounding therein. Worse enemies to thee than to me, he said to Maria. And whilst walking towards the wood he remembered that the weather had favoured him from the day he had set out from Scotland, a sunny sea and fine winds; and on land, too, he had enjoyed some fine days when the wind was southerly and the sky blue, veiled with transparent vapours drifting to the north. But those fine days were followed by harsh winds and cold rains; snow had fallen; and remembering the wet winter they had passed through, when it had rained all day and begun to rain again in the middle of the night, he said a rainy winter truly—and one not over yet. A winter of floods, rivers overflowing their banks, torrents, rills, runnels, and no sound in the country from bird or beast, only the cold sound of water. Can it be that God is once more minded to drown the world for its sins. Up above he is making ready for another big downpour. A wet night for us, Maria; thou in thy feathers will not heed it, but in these rags I will come on my death if I

find not a dry ditch. Not one is to be seen, nor even a hawthorn. So into the wood we go, though we lose our lives in it. But I can carry thee no farther, asthore; thou must trust to thine own legs. Maria's webbed claws were ill suited to clambering through bushes and tall tangled grasses, but she reached her master at last at the edge of the wood, which she seemed to recognise as dangerous for her, for she kept to his heels closely whilst he sought for a holly bush under which to pass the night, never finding one, only forest pools which Maria would have liked to voyage about in. There's no finer shelter in a forest than a holly tree, shelter from the rain and the wind. We have come upon one, my pulse, that will suit us as well as a house; and sleeping together, side by side, we won't feel the night passing.

So tired were the travellers that sleep came to them without their seeking it, and they slept for many hours, the darkness of the holly deceiving Maria as to the time of day; she had never overslept herself before, not as she did that night; and Tadhg, too, might have slept for another hour if Maria had not clapped her wings and screamed, a fear of the wood having awakened in her. And Tadhg, rising, said: Well, then, keep close to my heels, and we'll try to find the other side of the forest; and be saved many a mile of tramping. And with lighter hearts the two of them set out, but after walking through the trees for an hour the thought came to Tadhg that he ought to return to the holly where he had slept, for from the holly he knew his way out of the wood. But he could not find the holly and began to think he was lost. A hateful place to be lost in is this same wood, he said, tall trees straining to get a glimpse of the sky; elms I think they must be, but so thick is the ivy on them that there is no telling. An evil-smelling place it is; not much better than a swamp, he added, looking into a hollow overgrown with briars. Water is in the bottom, and it

stinking water; and he wondered that so white and beautiful a goose as Maria should scramble down to it. After the frogs, he said; and he waited on the bank for her, taking note of the trees, not having anything better to do. At a little distance from him was a decaying pine, and he remembered the beautiful pine trees of Galway near Ardrahan and the beech wood whither he used to lead his swine, and wondered why no word of endearment or reproof could persuade Maria to relinquish her divings in the dirty pool below him. After all, there is not much to complain of when a man is free, he said, and his thoughts returned once more to Ardrahan and the pigs running before him, knowing well the delicious mast they would find. Beyond the beech wood was Tirconnel's oak wood, littered in October with acorns. How the swine crunched, and how fat they were towards Christmas when their term of life began to close. Poor swine, he thought, they live only to get their throats stuck! And to escape from his memories of their squeals, he remembered that he had never liked an oak tree. A squat, harsh tree, not much shelter for man or beast beneath it, but good for acorns; fine food there is in acorns for pigs. And there are no other trees here but tall elms swathed in swart ivy; the ivy loves the elm better than any other tree. No larches are there; larches thrive not in a wood but on the fringe of a wood. Is Maria never coming out of that bog-hole? He was wronging Maria, for as he spoke the words she clambered up the steep bank, and they went on together through the mud about the roots of the trees. No secure foothold is there for the trees, but they grow so closely, he said, that each protects the other against the big winds that blow up from the sea. An evil-smelling wood, he said again, but the smell that comes up is not of rotten leaves. A fox has been by here. Maria, keep to my heels. Thou hast had a fine feed of frogs, and thou hast drunk thy fill of a water that would poison any human

belly, but does no harm to a goose's, so it would seem. But there must be an issue out of this wood. And wandering on they came to many blackthorns covered with little white flowers. Like roses, he said, only smaller. To escape from the thought that he was lost in the forest he climbed a tree, and the hen-hawk waited till he was within a few feet of the nest and then flew away with a scream that roused other hawks, and he said: Maybe I did wrong to disturb the bird, for if they catch a glimpse of Maria they might come down through the branches to be at her with beaks and talons. But no hawk came down, and the man and the goose plodded on, the man eating the salmon the fishers had given him on the Bann, offering a piece now and then to Maria. Salmon puts a great thirst into a man, he said, and it may be that it is of thirst I shall die in this wood. But we must surely come upon a brook or a well, for the whole wood cannot be a bog; in every wood there are hills. And sooner than he hoped for they came upon some rocks, and in the rocks was a trickle of water, at which he drank his fill. And after eating, he said: The day is no time for finding a way out of a lonesome wood. The nights are fine and the north star will show between the branches. Let us rest now, Maria, and travel during the night.

In this spirit of hope Tadhg and Maria dozed by the rill, but he had not been long asleep when Maria woke him with loud cries and clapping of wings, and he said: She has got the smell of a fox; we had better move on. Maria cried to be carried and he took her under his arm for safety, and walked on till fatigue again overcame him. Now, he said, I know which is the west and which is the east, for the sun is setting yonder, so I am headed for the west. And it cannot be more than a day's walk out of this wood. We'll both be better for a good sleep, for to-morrow will be long travelling; and once more Tadhg and Maria lay down to sleep, for the last

time, for at the deepest darkness, about midnight, Tadhg was awakened by Maria's screams. A fox has her! he said, and seized his staff; but he knew not where to seek her, and as he stumbled he heard her ever-weakening screams and guessed the fox had got her by the throat. The screams ceased, and he picked her up bleeding in his arms. Maria's eyes closed, and he carried her a long way, seeking a big stone under which he could hide her, for he could not bear to think that a fox would feed upon her. But to stand with one's back against a tree, nursing a dead goose, and waiting for the dawn, is lonely and is tedious, and a stout heart is needed to bear the length of the slow hours. But Tadhg's heart was still stout and at daybreak he started again, and coming soon after to a hillside covered with rocks and stones of all sorts, he said: A great place for the dead; every kind of tomb is here. And choosing a cleft where the fox would not be able to dig her out, he put a stone over her. I am not the man that I was, he said, for it is surely a foolish thing to mourn a goose. But there was never a goose like Maria, the one good soul in this world. And if God is willing to take me I am willing to go, for I am tired of this bleak, sorrowful world, as evil for the rich as for the poor, evil for all, I am thinking. He thought of his master, whom everybody loved, and of his master's father, the greatest man in Ireland, though some of his own were against him, saying that he was for the Scots. But if the world is evil for the great, there is but one good thing in it for the little: the hope of getting into heaven. And it may be that it was God's own will that kept me from the love of women, making me different from those that love and are loved. All the same, he might have left me Maria, for hers was a sinless love. The poor creature, like myself, never cared for one of her own kind; no gander ever tempted her, no woman me. We were alike and lonely and we were good to each other. And his grief

became so intense that he thought he must die of it, and leaning over the rocks among which he had found a seat he wept upon them for his goose and for himself until he could weep no more. And then he wandered without heed or care whither he was going, not awakening out of the stupor of his grief till the sound of rooks in the branches caught on his ear and he said: Wherever there are rooks there is a house, for like poor Maria they are lonely away from the homes of men. And wandering round the rookery he asked himself how it was that so many of the creatures of the earth had given up their freedom to dwell with men. Mayhap, he said, it is because we have souls and they have not; maybe it is our souls that draw them to us.

The rookery was among the last trees of the wood, and beyond it in a scoop of the land was a cottage; and going round it Tadhg said: There are people here, for I can hear them snoring. But to awaken them out of a good sleep would bring me no welcome; an outhouse with a lock of straw in it will suit me well. He lay down, and the sun was shining brightly through the chinks in the roof when he awoke. He slept again, and hours passed before anybody came to the outhouse. A child's voice! he said, struggling to his feet, and leaving the outhouse he came upon the child's mother. Back to the wood, rapparee! she cried, brandishing a weapon, for she had mistaken Tadhg for one of the outlaws or the madmen that roamed the woods in the times I am telling, and it needed Tadhg's quiet, winning voice to reassure the woman that he was merely a traveller come from Scotland and on his way to Mayo. And the woman hearing fair words, answered: Look at thyself and say if any child wouldn't scream to see thee. And Tadhg looking down saw that in clambering over rocks and through bushes he had left few clothes upon himself, some rags that hardly covered him, and these all foul with the mud

and filth of many days' travelling through wet and sleet, and the droppings of Maria, too, were all over him. I am ashamed of myself, he said; my clothes are worse than I thought for, though I knew them to be bad enough, and thou'lt be indeed a kind woman to give me a needle and thread and let me rest myself for a few hours more, a rest that I need surely, and during these hours I'll sew my rags. I might give thee a few clothes, she answered, and Tadhg said: Troth they'd be welcome. I'll seek them, she said; and if they are not much to look at, they will be better than those on thy back. My husband is away burning a castle for his lord or driving somebody's sheep and cattle, but if he came himself it wouldn't matter, for he is a kind man; so make thyself at home. And she brought the clothes she had promised to the stable, thinking it would be unpleasant to have him in the house. A dip in the river would do thee no harm, and there is one at Strule, not many hours from here. Be not in a hurry; when thou art rested. 'Tis the kind soul that is in thee; another night on the straw in the stable will give me back my strength. It was next morning, after having thanked the woman, that he took his direction from her. At the ford of Omagh he stripped and waded waist deep through the river, saying to himself when he reached the top: I am cleaner now than I was before. But how cold I am! A little run will get the ice out of me.

He trotted out of Strule wrapt in thoughts of the first meeting—the first sight of Sir Ulick's face, the first sound of Sir Ulick's voice. If he died on the journey or from the fatigue of it when he reached Castle Carra—well, he would have died whilst in search of his master or after having found him. And so intense were his thoughts that he walked almost consumed by them, the reality about him shadowy and confused, the dream all real within him, Castle Carra and Sir Ulick all clear and distinct; and when he met a wayfarer he listened to the story of the

burning of O'Rourke's castle at Dromahaire and of O'Gara's castle at Coolavin, interested vaguely, saying to himself: Whoever is up to-day will be down to-morrow. To give a willing ear to all he heard, to take it all in as if he were listening to a story, saved him from suspicion, and on parting from his travelling companion he would ask that which really concerned him, if he were right in making for the northern shore of Lough Erne and if a path was there that would bring him to Ballyshannon. He had a few coins among his rags and these he hoped would pay for the two days' rest he had promised himself at Ballyshannon, if he should be unable to find somebody charitable enough to give him a truss of straw in a stable to lie upon. His fish was now all eaten, but it was in the genius of Tadhg to discover charitable people. The truss of straw was given to him to lie upon, and he said: It is a great thing to sleep under a roof and to meet kind folk. Often kinder they were than he expected them to be, for on the day of his departure they would take nothing from him, and fish being plentiful that year he went away with one on his back.

Well, it's hard travelling, he said, as he started out on a dim grey morning, if the weather would only brighten a bit I wouldn't fail to get home. And no doubt God wills me to get home, or he wouldn't have sent all these people to help me. At that moment his thoughts of God and God's providence were interrupted by a sudden scent. The smell of the sea, he said, coming over the hills; I got it first after leaving Ballyshannon; and if the sun would light up those hills in front of me I'd have better courage to face a night under the stars, for it is the bleak night that is before me. But there have been worse nights in Armagh, wet fields and no more than a scraggy hawthorn to keep the wind off, and why should I be frightened now of a night on a dry hill with this good cloak to wrap me, unless it was the two nights spent in a warm

stable that have disheartened me. Or is it that we can suffer for a while and no longer? He continued walking without eyes or ears for the country he was walking through, till the steep of a hillside obliged him to stop to take breath; and it was whilst wiping the sweat from his forehead that he noticed that the sky was blue—Sunny clouds hanging in the wind, he said. And away he went again, faring without a pause till he stood by a lake atop of the last peak. Deep as the earth itself, he continued, filled with big pike, and maybe an eel in it that on certain nights is allowed by God to be a fairy again and speed over the lake to the stone where she sat with her mortal lover and then dragged him down into the depths with her, though she knew he would lose his breath under the water. His thoughts drifted into melodies, melody linking into melody, and the music in his mind did not cease till he came to a rich green plain with woods. A lovely country Ireland is surely and a pleasant country to live in if we had sense enough to leave off fighting. Again he lost his wits in dreams and many miles passed behind him without his seeing or hearing them or anything, but finding the way always as if an instinct guided him; and so strange was the instinct in him that at last it put the words into his mouth: The feeling of home is strong upon me and Sir Ulick; I can see him in my mind plainly— The sound of harp-strings interrupted his seeing, and whilst walking and peering he came upon three harpers tuning their instruments under a hedge breaking into leaf.

The poor, wayworn fellow listened like one enchanted, and when the little rehearsal was over the harpers began to tell of a great cattle spoiling and the slaying of a chieftain within a mile of his own castle; and a mournful shout broke from them all, for the chieftain was a friend of harpers, and Tadhg learnt from the leader of the band that he was perhaps the last chieftain of whom it

might be said that a harper was never turned from his doors. There are now few among the kings with ear enough to tell the difference between a harper whose fingers move through the thirty-two strings as smoothly as a breeze through wheat stalks, keeping his own part in an assemblage of six or a dozen harpers, never dropping into the tune but playing the chords allotted to him, and an old strummer of strings such as Pat Phelan; and the speaker caught up his harp and imitated Pat's notion of a tune, causing great laughter thereby. My faith, said Tadhg, it's a sad story that's coming and going through my ears, and I listening to you; and it's the first story I heard from a harper on landing in Ireland after being carried off by a party of Scots that had lost their way after the battle of Faughart Hill. Why, that's seven years ago, said one of the harpers. Seven long years, said Tadhg, and ever since I have been minding sheep on the Rhinns. But what of the harper met on thy landing? Well, I'd come over in a boat with my goose— With thy goose! And diverging from the story he had set out to tell, Tadhg told that Maria was taken by a fox. Tears came into his eyes and he sobbed, saying: None loved me but a goose, and she was taken from me. The only goose? There was another, Annie, and a fine watcher she was, cocking herself up on a hillock and letting a great cackle out of her when an eagle appeared in the sky. Thou must be something of a goose to have been loved by two geese! That may be, said Tadhg, for no man knows how much goose he is or how much man; no man knows more than this: that we are all God's creatures. And this appearing to the harpers like madness, they whispered among themselves till one of their number said: Thou wast about to tell of a harper met after landing in Ireland. He was in as big a hurry to get out of Ireland as I was to get into Ireland, and I told him of the boat that had brought me over from

Scotland. So that he might take it, said one of the harpers, and go over to Scotland? And why wouldn't he be in a hurry to leave a country in which, as you tell me, the harp is played by strummers and raspers? And Tadhg was asked if the harper to whom he had given his boat hoped to find a welcome for his harp in Scotland. And thou, said the leader of the band, hast thou an ear for harp-playing? The ear is left, but the hand is stiff on me after following sheep and geese for seven years on the Rhinns. Pass him on thy harp, Morgan, for I'd prove him. Tadhg took the harp, and though he had lost much of his skill enough was left to astonish the harpers, who after hearing him, said: There is Dennis O'Carroll of Sligo who gives a great welcome to harpers, and thou wouldst do well to come with us. He plays well, said the others, and after a few days' practice will play better. Lord O'Carroll will give thee a bed and a bite and praise thy playing, for thou hast a touch on the string that he's been looking for this many a day. Tadhg said: So be it, and he walked with the harpers till a cloud of smoke rose over the tree tops. Now, what can that smoke be, coming out of O'Carroll's country? Their steps quickened and none dared to speak the words on his lips: Was his castle burnt last night? It was, faith, said a peasant they met on the road. Burnt it was whilst he and his men were cattle spoiling in Leitrim; and there being no more between you and the castle than half a mile, step it out and you'll see the roof fall in. It will be a fine sight, said one of the harpers; we would save his roof if we could. But not being able to save it, said another, we will play about the burning, for he was a good man to harpers. And the same phrase was repeated: He never sent a harper away without a sup and a bite and a coin in his pocket. He may have been that with harpers, the peasant answered, but he was a hard man with us. And whilst the castle burnt stories of

whippings were told: a whipping for the stealing of a dead branch, two strokes of the whip for faggoting, four for snaring rabbits and hares, and death under the whip for the killing of a deer. The harpers played and the castle burnt, and when the roof fell in the leader said to Tadhg: Thou'lt never play under that roof; it's gone for ever. But we haven't taken thee out of thy way if it's to Mayo thou'rt going. Faith, thou hast guessed it, Tadhg answered, and then the thought coming to him suddenly, he asked among the crowd of peasants come to witness the burning if any of them could give him news of Richard, Earl de Burgo.

He died last year, said a peasant. Of what sickness? Tadhg asked. The doctors couldn't tell him, which didn't matter, for a man knows better than doctors when he is among his last days. My last Parliament! he said at Kilkenny when he locked the door, and he called all the county together for the biggest feast ever given in Ireland, after which he forgave everybody; and vowing that he would sin no more in this world if he got well, he died in the monastery at Athassel. Well, said Tadhg, it's a great thing to die among holy men that have in their keeping the forgiveness of sin and God's sacraments. But since you've told me about the Earl himself and his end, you may be able to give me news of his son. Whereupon a babble began in the crowd about William, his grandson, their heir, and Tadhg cried: It's not him that I want to hear of but the bastard Sir Ulick that went with me to France. Whereat they stared at him. Went with thee to France! Yes, for I'm Tadhg O'Dorachy that was the harper of the Earl himself, and many a time I've played behind his chair. At these words they all wondered, and Tadhg had to tell how he had been taken to Scotland by the Scots and kept prisoner till he found a boat and escaped. We would hear how the strait was crossed; God was in charge of thee, else thou wouldst

have been drowned. I would have news from you, if you have any to tell, of my dear master, Sir Ulick de Burgo. He is gone where his father went, said a man. Dead? cried Tadhg. Not dead, but in a monastery. Sir Ulick de Burgo in a monastery! You are asking me to believe more than I can. Sir Ulick de Burgo a monk! I cannot believe that, for why should he, who never had a thought of God but to laugh at him, turn suddenly to God? And at once everybody began to talk of the grace of God, one man telling a story how grace came to a sinner between the saddle and the ground; but despite the miracle Tadhg continued to hold to his belief that one loved God from the beginning or not at all, and he held to this opinion till a priest that had just come from his chapel after saying Mass told him he mustn't say such things as that to his parishioners. For we are all sinful men, he said, in this world. And he turns a deaf ear, cried a man, to the miracle of the man that received God's grace between the saddle and the ground. Sure, said the priest, every man knows that that miracle is a true one. Now, who can this man be? An Irishman, come from France— Ah! that makes a difference. But even in France they should have known of the miracle. And he continued to exhort Tadhg as if he were an unbelieving man, Tadhg answering: Sure, father, I never heard the story before; it came sudden upon me. But can you tell me, since you are a cleric and should be informed, if it be true that Sir Ulick de Burgo is a monk? No news has come to me, answered the priest, of his having entered an Order, but he has given much money to the monks of Ballintober in Mayo; more than that we do not know. Well then, said Tadhg, I must bid you good-bye, for I must hear the story out, and nowhere shall I hear the whole of it except in Ballintober Abbey. And the crowd watched him stumbling down the road, and had any one of the crowd been behind him he would have

heard the old man muttering to himself: A monk! And what did he do that for? His father was old, but he is still a young man, and Soracha with him. But maybe it was Soracha herself that got grace to say: Ulick, we are living in sin. I vowed myself to God, and if the nuns will take me, I'll go back and pray for thee. With Soracha gone from him he had nothing to live for and wandered about the castle and into the forest, unable to put his thoughts to any purpose but thinking of the nun he had lost with no breasts at all, the way he liked them, for surely when she came down the rope from the window into my arms she was as slender and supple as a ferret. He got what he wanted, but she has been taken away from him by the grace of God, and very soon now grace will be given to him.

He could think no further, nor could he see much in front of him, a mist being in his eyes. He stumbled on, and fell upon a green bank by the roadside hard by a cabin— A great piece of luck, Alec, for there weren't many cabins in Ireland at the time I'm speaking of. Where did the people live then, your honour, if not in cabins? In the woods and in the hills, and not many there, for in the time I'm telling there weren't a million people in all Ireland, and Ireland being a big place there must have been long stretches of road between one cabin and another. Tadhg wasn't long on the bankside when the woman that lived in the cabin caught sight of him from her gate, and going to his help she lifted him up and took him into the cabin, saying: Here is a sup of milk, honest man. There are children about that want it? he asked. No, she answered, my children have gone from me. After drinking he asked if he might lie down. Is it a harp I see by the dresser? he said. Faith, it is, and my dead husband's—a great harper, the greatest in Ireland. As much has been said about myself; but it's a long time since I've seen a harp, and longer still since

I have touched one. And though he had barely strength to take the harp from her hands, she knew he was a harper and pitied him. I will string it for thee, he said, when I am rested. He fell back upon the straw and awoke after several hours' sleep more tired than he was when he lay down, and the woman could tell that not much life remained in him, just a thread, which might strengthen by degrees or might snap at any moment. There were always eggs and milk, and he was fed with these whenever Catherine could escape from her work in the garden and the few fields about her cabin, and when she left him he slept, to awaken two or three hours later, or less—time having ceased for him. For many days he barely distinguished morning from evening or day from night; he ate when food was given to him, slept, and awoke to find himself alone in the cabin, the fire burning on the hearth and himself without strength to pile on a few more sods. The fire died into white ashes, and he was sorry that he could not rouse himself, for when Catherine returned she would have to seek fagots and relight her fire. But so it was. He dreamed a little; images came and went; and it was not till the end of the second week that he began to speak of Scotland and the seven years he had spent on the Rhinns shepherding a flock of sheep, following geese, beaten and starved. When thou art stronger thou'lt tell me of thy travelling from Larne hither. He smiled, a weak, happy smile, and answered: Next week. She said he must have some chicken broth, and a long-legged, headless fowl walked about for a while, nearly falling into the fire, but was rescued at the last moment, drawn and plucked by Catherine, and plunged into the boiling pot that hung from an iron bar by a chain. The soup revived Tadhg, and she said: To-morrow thou shalt eat the meat of the chicken.

I remember, he said, a harp that needs stringing; I'd like to string it if thou hast strings. She went to the

bedside and sought amid the shelves, and finding what she was seeking came back, saying: My husband was a harper; here is his harp and here are his strings. And the day being fine, the sun shining in the garden (summer has returned whilst thou wert gathering strength on this pallet), come with me to the seat under the lilac bushes, and there thou shalt string the harp. And being no mean judge of harp-playing, my husband being a harper, I can tell which of you be the greater player, the man that God took from me or the man that he sent to be cared for and nursed. I have done my best with thee. Lean on me, she added, and Tadhg was led into the garden; and falling into the seat under the lilac bushes, he said: Now, give the harp into my hands. To-day I have two boys working for me, said Catherine, and must be about cooking their food. The harp will be strung, Tadhg answered, before they have had their dinner. But the garden being just behind the house, the strains reached Catherine's ears whilst she cooked, and she marvelled and said: Never did my husband play as this man plays. She came and listened to him, forgetful of the food, and returned to it in a hurry and gave it to her workmen, asking them to eat. Listen, she said, to his harp-playing and you'll forget that the porridge is burnt; and she put a big jug of buttermilk before them and went out again to hear Tadhg, who when he saw her ceased playing. Do not stop playing, she said. I am tired, he answered. I will play better to-morrow. And the two sat watching the birds coming down in great numbers from the poplars beyond the garden. The bees, too, are busy; the lilac will soon be in bloom, he said, and the quiet day died, leaving them sitting together; and the next day opening on a sunny morning, Tadhg was out again with the harp. And whilst listening to him it seemed to Catherine that happiness might be in her cabin if she could keep him and hear him play the harp every evening whilst

she spun. But her foot forgot the pedal and her ear the music, for the thought came to her that in a few days he would go, for he had told her all his tale and how he must find Sir Ulick de Burgo, who was in the Abbey of Ballintober at the head of Lough Carra, not more than thirty miles from the spot on which they were now standing. But thirty miles is a long way for a man to travel on foot, and he without money or a harp on his back to earn a bite or a sup. Didn't they take the harp from me in Scotland, he answered, saying I'd be wasting my time with it instead of looking after the sheep. The Devil take him who took the harp from thee! she said, and the blessing of God be upon the harp that I'll give thee, for it was my husband's. But I wouldn't be taking thy husband's harp. Why not? for it's he would be glad, however he may be changed or wherever he may be, to know that his harp has come into the hands of one who can play it. So it's been hanging on a nail unplayed ever since he died? said Tadhg. It will bring thee food and lodging, and if thou shouldst ever come this way again 'tis I will be glad to hear thee play it.

Faith, I shall not forget that the first time I played it was in thy garden, Tadhg answered, and he passed down the road thinking that there would be no more lonesomeness for him now he had a harp on his back, and he remembered that if it had not been for Maria's company he would not have been able to travel from Larne down into Sligo. And good company she was, he said, none better, asking to be carried when we were passing rocks and bushes where a fox might be lying in wait, and asking to be let down when we were within sight of a plain where she could look after herself; and knowing that her waddle was delaying me, she'd fly three or four hundred yards ahead to feed till I caught her up. She knew as much, that bird did, as a Christian, and the fox wouldn't have got her if I hadn't been sunk in sleep

out of hearing of her cackling, for she must have squawked her insides nearly out when she got the smell of the fox and she must have got as tight up to me as she could, the poor creature! A daring fox, to be sure; if I had wakened then I'd have dealt him a blow with my stick that he wouldn't have forgotten in a hurry.

I'd like to tell you, said Alec, about a duck that left all the other ducks and followed my sister like a dog, as clever a bird as your Tadhg's goose, and it wasn't so strange after all, for geese and ducks are of the same kind, the brainiest of the birds that walk, fly, or swim, and perhaps the most apt to make pets of men and women. Even the wildest of them all, the hawks and the eagles, can be trained to hunt game, and jackdaws ask for nothing better than to be tamed; and he told a story of a jackdaw in Westport that would fly after a carriage and come in by the window. The rooks, too, he continued, like to build round men's houses, and pigeons are as tame as fowls. Foxes and wolves, I said, are as dogs if you give them a chance; and I told him of a tame wolf I had known, more affectionate than any dog. For all the domestic animals were wild once, Alec. And he asked me what there was in man that should tempt animals to leave their kin. Horses will follow men about, but they won't follow bulls or cows, deer or swine. It must be, said Alec, that they worship man as we worship God. Faith, a dog will outdo any priest in this part of the country in worship of his master. And wishing to stay his tongue and get on with my story, I answered: It may be that animals have an instinct for the soul that is in man more than we have ourselves. If a ghost comes into a room a dog has knowledge of it before we have; he is guided by other instincts and perceptions than ours. We know as little of his life as he does of ours, and perhaps his life is as incomprehensible to him as our lives are to us. But I have told a good deal of my story

to-day, and on our way back to the Lodge I would hear how it strikes you. You have heard a great deal about ancient Ireland from your uncle, and should be able to point out some mistakes; there must be some.

My uncle was always reading and thinking about Ireland and was knowledgeable about the country, about customs and ways, how they ate and drank, how they rode and behaved themselves. The Fianna always walked, for there were no horses then in Ireland, and there wasn't even an ass in Ireland for many centuries later; asses came into Ireland with the potatoes about three hundred years ago. The two big social events in Ireland, Alec, were the ass and the potatoes; and there's an ass in my story at Dunmore! He had better come out, your honour, for those who are up in Irish history will be saying— Maybe they will, Alec, but if they aren't saying that they'll be saying something else, and I'm thinking now on what the Irish lived before the potatoes came. They lived a great deal upon beans, I am thinking; and though you don't say much about Catherine's holding, it wasn't out of keeping with what I've heard from my uncle. In the ancient times a man with twenty acres of land and a strip of bog, or a bit of wood for firewood, was in paradise. For your honour knows that grass grows a month longer in Ireland than it does in any other country on the ridge of the world, and there were few people in Ireland at the time, most of them having been killed in the wars. I think you said yourself not up to a million, and that I'd judge to be about the right figure; so there was often a mile between a cabin and the next, and perhaps twenty between villages, and all through your story I've been thinking that Tadhg wasn't out of his luck when the fox took the goose, for he never could have crossed Ireland with Maria. He lost her at the right time, and he met the widow, too, when he needed her most. Every journey is lucky or unlucky,

and Tadhg was a lucky man all the way to Sligo, to the mearing between Sligo and Mayo, and it isn't far from the mearing that we are leaving him now.

CHAP. LIII.

IT was about thirty miles or five-and-thirty from Castlebar that we left Tadhg, meeting with kindness from everybody; all the same, these last miles were perhaps as hard as any he had known, and more than once he sank into a dry ditch feeling there was no strength in him to walk another mile. But after a long sleep in the ditch he went on as a dog does in search of his master, and there was a great joy in him when he came within sight of the county of Mayo, the cone of Croagh Patrick nearly always in front of him and the great ugly mountain of Nephin dropping into rich grasslands with Castlebar nearly at the end of them. The weather favoured him and he walked admiring a girl carrying a pail of pigs' food through the blossoming trees, followed by a great sow and a dozen squealing bonhams that reminded him of his days in Ardrahan. A little farther on he stopped to admire a herd of cows collected round a spring-head, and clucking hens leading their broods through the hedges delighted him, and he was sorry when he left the last orchard behind him and came within sight of a stretch of forest. The trees began in the marshes, for in the days when Tadhg O'Dorachy walked from Castlebar to Ballintober Abbey in search of his master the county which is now cut away bog was fen and forest; but on the other side, as you know as well as I do, Alec, there are some pleasant green hills, and it is over against green hills that the Abbey was built on a knoll by Roderick O'Conor, last King of Connaught. But your honour hasn't said why Tadhg turned aside to Ballintober instead of going straight on to Castle Carra, where he'd find his master.

You have forgotten, Alec, that the news in Sligo was that Sir Ulick was a monk in the monastery of Ballintober; and Tadhg as he walked out of Sligo into Mayo was a disappointed man and vexed by the thought that the soft climate had put a monk's habit on Sir Ulick and shaved his pate. Your honour thinks that the soft climate has a lot to do with the making of us? My uncle thought the same. And I wouldn't be saying, Alec, that Tadhg as he walked wasn't troubled in his conscience for wishing for the same Sir Ulick as he had known in France rather than a monk; and maybe he had walked a couple of miles before he got the two ideas that were badgering him to agree, saying to himself: It isn't every man that's suited to be a monk, and Sir Ulick isn't half the age that his father was when he left the world. A good confession would have been enough and a vow never to give a thought to women again, bad or good, for didn't he tell me himself that he never could talk to a woman without thinking—now, what were his words? He had not discovered in his memory the words that Sir Ulick had spoken whilst riding from Dunmore to Athlone when the porter opened the door, saying as soon as his eyes fell on the grey, ragged figure, with the weariness and dirt of long travel upon him: From thy knock I'd have thought I was going to see the Archbishop himself! Did I knock loud, brother? Three times. I didn't know I knocked three times; I was thinking of what my master said to me seven years ago. But thou hast not come knocking three times to ask me what thy master said to thee seven years ago? I have come here in search of Sir Ulick de Burgo, my master, a monk— We have no monk of that name. Maybe he is not a monk but a guest, and if that be so go and tell the Abbot that Tadhg O'Dorachy has come from Galloway and would see him. Did I hear thee rightly—thy master was Sir Ulick de Burgo? My master is Sir Ulick de Burgo. Whereupon he was asked

to step inside and a few minutes after the surly porter returned. The Abbot will see thee.

Tadhg followed the lay brother up some stone stairs built amid clammy limestone walls till they came to an ogive door; and there being no landing (the door opened on the stairway), the monk ascended two steps and Tadhg passed into a low-ceilinged room lighted by two lattice windows. A low musical voice with an affectionate ring in it, speaking from a high-backed chair, asked Tadhg if he were the messenger from Galloway. Yes, my lord Abbot, I have come from Galloway. Round this way, please, so that I may see thee. And when Tadhg had come round and stood in front of the high-backed chair, he found in it a little man quiet as a rabbit, long-bodied and short-legged, pleasantly rotund. Thou wast with him in France? Yes, my lord Abbot. And on thy return from France thou wast with him in Castle Carra, and rode with him to West Meath, to Durrow? There were deer in the park, and being a little man, my lord Abbot, it was hard for me to reach the stirrup, the horse being seventeen hands high; and whilst trying for the stirrup a stag attacked me and it was a great wrestling match between us. I threw the stag and he threw me, and so it went on, turn and turn about, till I had to cry for help. I know that part of the story, said the Abbot, but afterwards? I was taken prisoner by a party of Scots that missed their way and for the last seven years have worked as a shepherd round the moorlands over against Larne. But I'll be better able to tell you of my escape in the boat when I hear from you that Sir Ulick de Burgo still lives. My lord Abbot, I beseech you to speak at once. Sir Ulick is not dead, the Abbot answered. Thanks be to God! and a good God he is, for I knew he would not have brought me all this long journey for nothing. I'd say a prayer, my lord Abbot, but I wouldn't be delaying you. Sir Ulick is not dead, the Abbot said,

but he is not to be found in Castle Carra nor in the Abbey, but on an island in the lake praying that the Princess Soracha may be returned to him. Has she left him, my lord Abbot? Or has King O'Melaghlin waged war and carried her away from Castle Carra and put her back into a convent? None of these things happened; but before going to see Sir Ulick on his island it would be well for thee to hear his story. Is it a long one, my lord Abbot? I will not keep thee from thy master longer than I can help, but to save thee from putting questions to him— To save me from putting questions to my master! Even so, said the Abbot, and the reasons thou'lt apprehend easily in the course of the story.

After waiting for thee by the gap in the park wall, Sir Ulick de Burgo and the Princess Soracha rode on, reaching Athlone soon after midnight; and when their horses were rested they rode on again, stopping at Roscommon, Dunmore, and Ballinrobe, and from Ballinrobe they rode to Castle Carra. But I am thinking that they would have done better to have ridden from Ballinrobe to Cong, whence one of the Earl's barges would have taken them to Galway; at Galway they would not have had long to wait for a ship bound for Honfleur, and in France they might have lived in plausible happiness till the Arch-fiend abandoned them to their consciences and they were constrained to make their peace with God. But they rode to Castle Carra. I am not saying, Tadhg, that they might not have lived in peace in Castle Carra for a week or a month, or maybe till the new year. News travels slowly through an empty country, and Bruce's head being sent to Edward of England in salt, Ireland had little thought for anything else but ridding the country of the remnant of Bruce's army in hiding in the woods and hills. The Normans were busy killing them all the winter and in the spring of 1319, and I am afraid that many Irishmen were killed in the different skirmishes;

for it is not easy for Normans to distinguish between the Irish and Scotch, and the lust of killing being upon them they killed indiscriminately. King O'Melaghlin's grief at hearing that his daughter had left her convent with Sir Ulick de Burgo is not to be described in words, at least in no words that I can find, but the twain had nothing to fear from him. Ireland desired peace above all things, and King O'Melaghlin may have said to himself: My duty is to consider Ireland's welfare, and it is for the clerics to tell me if her spiritual welfare would be served by my gathering an army to avenge the wrong that has been done to me. Or again it may have been that King O'Melaghlin had not the great number of soldiers needed to lay siege to Castle Carra. We may indulge in many conjectures without getting nearer the truth, so I'll say no more than that King O'Melaghlin did not leave Lough Ennel at the head of an army in 1319, and Sir Ulick and the Princess Soracha might have lived undisturbed, enjoying whatever happiness their sins brought to them, if Sir Ulick had been content to live in the castle as he found it; he sought to make it worthy of the Princess Soracha, and to do that he summoned his father's builders and ordered them to transform the old Irish fortress into the likeness of a French castle. But it was not the rebuilding of the castle that roused the people, clerics and laity together, nor the furnishing of it; tapestries, carved bedsteads, chests and polished tables, might have continued to come in waggons from Cong without a word of protest, for it was not yet known that the Princess was an escaped nun. Even an escaped nun would not have been enough to rouse Ireland out of her war weariness, and it was not till statues of Venus and Apollo and many other Gods and Goddesses were brought from France that the Irish people began to murmur, asking if the Paganism that St. Patrick had put out of Ireland was going to be brought back by Sir Ulick de Burgo. I cannot cast blame

upon the clerics; they brought no charge against Sir Ulick; it was the people themselves who spoke about the statues without a stitch on them. The clergy may have added: Without loin linen or vine leaves, no more than that. It was not till the Princess Soracha, dressed in a scarlet habit and carrying a bow and quiver, led the chase through the forest, that somebody cried: Diana of the Ephesians is among us! I have said that the people were weary and desired peace more than anything else, but the human mind is ingenious and will not be gainsaid, and a story arose, whether in moot-house or chapel I know not, that Pagan worship was practised in Castle Carra by Sir Ulick de Burgo and the Princess Soracha; worse still, that those among their dependents who consented to genuflect before Apollo and Venus were rewarded by presents of money and grants of pasturage. Then the gorse began to blaze, the fire running hither and thither, and it was not the clerics that sent a petition to the Earl asking him to protect them from Sir Ulick de Burgo, who would force upon them the Paganism of ancient Greece, but the people themselves. The petition was written by a layman and brought from Mayo to Galway by a layman, and the Earl being advanced in years, was much concerned that his Mayo subjects should be asked to worship Pagan Gods and sent a messenger with letters to his son and to me. And I said to Sir Ulick, who came to me for advice: I do not believe that you wish to restore the worship of Apollo and Bel, but the best way of proving your good faith will be to leave the country for a time. That I would do and willingly, he said, but there is Soracha, who will not leave Castle Carra. When you leave Castle Carra, I answered, she will return to her father or to the convent. And it was whilst wrangling over this point with him that the thought came to me that it would be well for him to go to Rome and lay his case before the Holy Father. But, said

Tadhg, wasn't it to God himself that she vowed her virginity? The Pope is God's vicar on earth, the Abbot answered, and has not God himself said: Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven—words that proceeded out of a divine foreseeing, for ever since God died for us on the cross the Church has been menaced by infidel powers. The Arabs made themselves masters of the greater part of western Asia, of the north of Africa, of Spain, and now the Turks, another Mahommedan power, are causing great disquiet. The ultimate aim of Turkish ambition is Constantinople, and if we lose Constantinople many Christians will be forced to trample upon the cross or die for their faith. To save the Church much money is needed, and were Earl de Burgo to help with money or with an army to resist the Turks, the Holy Father might be moved to release the Princess Soracha from her vows. So did I write to the Earl and so did I speak to Sir Ulick when he came here, and he left me in the belief that the case of the Princess Soracha might be referred to the judgment of the Pope. But delay followed delay, and when the news of the revival of Paganism in Castle Carra reached the ears of King O'Melaghlin he began to preach a crusade to save Connaught and his daughter from Paganism; and the Earl foreseeing that a cry like this would unite all Ireland against him, sent for his son. And it was whilst waiting for her lover to return to her that the news reached Princess Soracha that her father had left Lough Ennel with an army. She came here to ask my advice, and sitting in that chair she said: The siege of Castle Carra will be but the beginning of a war that will last for years. She asked me how this war might be stopped and I told her I had given Sir Ulick a letter for his father in which I derided the story that Pagan worship was being established in Castle Carra. Truth compelled me to add

that the story was believed and that I could see no way of making an end of it except by Sir Ulick leaving Castle Carra; and I spoke of his return to France. Sir Ulick approved of the letter, I said, and every day I thought to hear of your departure. My lord Abbot, he tried to persuade me to leave Castle Carra. If you are right, and I should have left Ireland with him, the fault is mine. To which I answered: Is your liking then for Castle Carra so deep that you would prefer to plunge Ireland into a war that would last for years rather than leave it? There is no love for the castle in me, she answered, but he could not persuade me, and I cannot tell you, my lord Abbot, why he could not persuade me. I am like a chained prisoner. We sought the chains that bind me to Castle Carra but we found none; yet there are chains, for I feel them heavy upon me, invisible chains. I am bound to Castle Carra, I know not how or why, only that it is so.

At these words Tadhg dared to interrupt the Abbot in his story. May it not be, my lord Abbot, that her good angel was without strength to lead her out of Castle Carra, he having been routed so badly by the bad angel at Durrow? It may have been something like that; but to continue my story: I turned to the Princess Soracha and taking her hand I said: My dear daughter, confession is a great help. True, my lord Abbot, she answered, confession would be a great help if I could promise to leave my lover, but that I cannot do. You have come, my child, to ask my help? My lord Abbot, I have come to tell you that I would give my life willingly if by doing so I might save Ireland, and to ask you to look into St. Paul's words; he says that he would hold himself accursed from Christ if by this means his brethren according to the flesh, meaning the Jews, might be gathered into Christianity. But it may be that I have put the meaning that I wish to find on the Apostle's words. My brother Peter is famed in this monastery for his inter-

pretations of Scripture, I answered, and I beg you to put yourself under his guidance whilst I ride to the Shannon, where I shall meet your father and his army nearing the ford at Roscommon. If not, he will take the shores of Lough Allen, and enter Mayo by the southern shore of Lough Gill—words spoken whilst thinking of my journey and of the haste I should make, of the different villages at which I should change horses and many other things; so for some seconds I lost sight of Princess Soracha, and when I turned my eyes to her I saw she was taking no heed of me or of my words. The spell of martyrdom is upon her! I said to myself, and once more I begged her to put herself under the guidance of Peter; and to Peter I addressed myself afterwards, saying: Be gentle with her, else she will escape from us. Speak no harsh words; detain her with promises; tell her that I shall succeed in persuading the King her father to return to Lough Ennel, which I shall do. And Peter seeming to apprehend the danger, I rode away to Ballinrobe, where I changed horses, and then on to Dunmore, and so tired was I during the last miles that I had to be lifted from my horse. A day's rest and then on again, and it was after passing the Suck that I got news of King O'Melaghlin from the Abbot of Ballintober in Roscommon. Thou hast great need to meet him, brother, said the Abbot. The greatest need on earth, to save a soul from hell, I answered; but ask me no more; and barely able to sit upon my horse I rode on. At Roscommon I crossed in a boat and coming to the encampment of the King, I said: I have come from Mayo, riding by day and by night, hoping to reach you in time, for I bring news of your daughter. Then speak, my lord Abbot, he said, and when he had heard the whole story, I said: Now, in the name of the Church I beg your majesty to withdraw your army; I beseech you to return to Lough Ennel, or as sure as you live your daughter will throw herself from

the battlements of the castle or drown herself in the lake. Has it come that a daughter of mine will defy God? he said. She came to ask me if there was salvation for her who takes her own life, and I put her under the guidance of my brother Peter, who is famed for his interpretations of Scripture; but he will not be able to keep her from what she looks upon as a martyrdom when the news reaches Mayo that you have crossed the Shannon. I put my faith in you, cleric, he said, my hand upon it; and he ordered the withdrawal of his host. And my horse being exhausted he gave me a fresh horse to take me back to Mayo. I bought or hired horses when I could get them, and at Ballinrobe my heart misgave me when the inn-keeper said: My lord Abbot, all my horses are out on hire. After looking into my face, he said: My lord Abbot, if all my horses were in the stables I'd sooner they remained in their stables for the next six months than give you one to ride to-day, so tired is your face. I have been riding for nearly six days in great anxiety of mind, I said, and I'll stay with thee for a day, Colman, but a longer stay I dare not. You will be sore to-morrow morning, my lord Abbot, and the day after and the day after; six days it takes to rid the bones of the weariness of a six days' ride. No matter, Colman; to-morrow I must go. And the next day I stumbled to my horse and clung to the saddle as a drunken man might, and all the while a great misgiving was upon me, for I could not put back the thought that had I been able to ride without stopping at Ballinrobe I might have come in time to avert a great calamity. Every mile from Ballinrobe right into the village of Carnacun my heart smote me, for I could not put out of my mind the look of dark ecstasy I'd seen on her face. She is in the lake or in pieces under the battlements, I said, and turning out of my way I rode into the forest. A wood-cutter gave me the news in his simple language: She flung herself over

the walls two nights ago, and this morning Sir Ulick, who came from Galway, walked over her and is now like a man demented. If he is only like a man demented it will be well enough, I said, and I rode to my Abbey like one in a dream, now and again awakening to the remembrance of what had happened, her young life dashed out on the stones to save Ireland from another war. Her martyrdom will be remembered, I said; it will go forth all over Ireland; it will cross the sea.

CHAP. LIV.

'TIS a terrible tale you're telling, my lord Abbot, said Tadhg. He covered his face with his hands and speaking through sobs and tears he said: A terrible tale, surely, the worst ever heard in Ireland. My poor master, my poor master! He coming home thinking of the sweet face of his Princess, of the delight it would be to him to see her again, and finding only bruised pulp in pools of blood. O, my lord Abbot, if I had known of this in Scotland I think I would never have come out of Scotland. My poor master, alone in Castle Carra—alas! not alone but with black grief to keep him company up on the ramparts and round the rocks, wherever he went; by day time and night time he'd be wandering with his grief. My lord Abbot, I must go to him. Have I not said, Tadhg, that he is a hermit living on an island in the lake? Yes, my lord. And I say, too, that I must tell the end of the story, which is not far off now. You, my lord Abbot—did you never go to Castle Carra? The news from Castle Carra was that he saw nobody and never passed the drawbridge except at night to walk in the forest. Ah, if I'd been there! said Tadhg. Thy presence would not have soothed his grief; grief heals like a wound, leaving a scar. And looking back upon the year that I kept myself from Castle Carra, I think that I did well to keep away. A sudden

intrusion on his solitude would open the wound again, I said to myself, and again and again I resisted the temptation to go to him, saying: We had better meet by chance; and the answer was, thought answering thought: We may live for years within three miles of each other without meeting. But I was confident that some chance would bring us together; I did not know how or when, but I put my faith in chance, and when I heard that he had built little huts in the forest into which he might escape from the curious and the passer-by, I said: I will ride in the forest, my eyes away from the huts. One day he'll catch sight of me and run to hide himself in one of the huts, and this he'll do perhaps twice or three times; but sooner or later he will call me back. My patience was rewarded, for one day I heard a voice saying: My lord Abbot! I drew rein and Sir Ulick said: You have taken to riding, my lord Abbot, in the forest, and I answered: If it is your will, Sir Ulick, that I should keep to the hills I will do so. On these words we drifted into casual talk, myself watchful to say nothing that would betray my thoughts to him, for of course I was thinking of Soracha all the time; and he, too, was thinking of Soracha. But her name was not spoken that day, nor the next nor the next. Sometimes our talks were short and sometimes longer, till at last he said: My lord Abbot, I have missed you from the forest; you have not ridden by for nearly a week; and I answered briefly that business had detained me. But you will be riding this way again before long? Sir Ulick asked, and in the hope of bringing him to speak his mind to me, I said that I was going away for a long holiday to the sea. And reading disappointment in his face, I added: You, too, Sir Ulick, would do well to go away for a holiday, to your own country, to Normandy; what say you? And he answered sadly that if he left Castle Carra the Princess Soracha would not know where to find him. Spirits are

not weighted with bodies as we are, I replied, but as if he had not heard me he said, looking into my face steadfastly: If she be not withheld by some great power she will come to tell me that she is waiting for me. I hear her cry every night, the wail of a spirit that would speak to one on earth and is given but a short time between night and day to speak. Tell me, my lord Abbot, if your learning and piety reveal to you the secret whether the Princess Soracha is in heaven, in hell, or in purgatory. If she were in hell, I answered, it would be no help to you to know that she was there. Pardon me, my lord Abbot, I would welcome the news that Soracha was in hell, for I could go to hell easier than I could get to heaven. How so? said I. I have but to worship other Gods to make sure of damnation, he answered. But I do not know that Soracha is in hell, and if I earned a place in hell by worshipping statues and did not find her there, then indeed I should be a lost soul. Hell is hell always, with or without the Princess Soracha, I said. Avaunt theology! he cried. But tell me if the suicide is debarred from heaven always; answer me that, cleric. The Princess put the same question to my brother, and he read to her from St. Augustine the story of three holy women who threw themselves into a river to escape violation. These women were afterwards held in reverence by the Church, and there are many cases in Scripture that cause the Saint to doubt whether he should condemn or condone. All that seems certain is that the suicide debarred from heaven is he who would escape from the trouble with which his life is beset. God involves man in much trouble that he may be purified, and whoever bears the troubles that God has put upon him becomes pure in God's sight even as Job. Come to Ballintober and I will read you what St. Augustine says about suicide.

O my Lord Christ, I thank thee for having let me live to this day! A happy day it is for me, his sins being

forgiven to my master and he ready to take his place amid the choirs of angels and arch-angels, seraphs and cherubims. Tadhg buried his face in his hands, and so moved was the Abbot that he could not do else than unite with Tadhg in a prayer of thanksgiving to the High King for his power and goodness in bringing a sinner back to grace. At the end of the prayer Tadhg rose from his knees and was about to depart, but was called back by the Abbot. There is still a story to tell that thou must hear before going to the island to see thy master, and Tadhg murmured in answer: I am in no hurry, for 'tis a delight indeed to hear how my dear master came to repent his sins. Did he confess, my lord? Tadhg, thy question surprises me, for how could he pray whilst he was in mortal sin? I had forgotten that; sure I'm wandering, said Tadhg. We could not withdraw him from his prayers— Withdraw him from his prayers, my lord Abbot! A sinner comes to the Church and to prayer like a hurt child to his mother. In such wise did Sir Ulick de Burgo come to the Abbey of Ballintober, and none too soon; for I feel now that I was sent by God to Castle Carra to save him from the plans that he was laying to make sure of his damnation. O Lord! O Lord! O Lord! was he planning that devilment? said Tadhg. Have I not told thee, Tadhg, that he was willing to set up a worship of Pagan Gods to make certain of damnation? And isn't God a good God that he should bring a sinner from such a depth of sin right up into heaven, into his love and his sacraments? All life is the work of God, said the Abbot, and all is wonderful; from the angels above the stars to the worms under the earth, all is wonderful. He must be the holiest man now on the top of this earth! said Tadhg. At these words the Abbot frowned a little, and to escape from uttering a reproof that might betray him he began to tell how the desire of prayer for the release of Soracha's soul from purgatory

kept Sir Ulick in the chapel at all hours. One more prayer, he would cry to the tired sacristan, one more prayer, I beseech thee, and I will leave the church. But however long the sacristan waited Sir Ulick would want him to wait for still another prayer, till at last Moling would take him by the hand and lead him out.

His father's death in the monastery of Athassel affected him so deeply that he gave all the money he had inherited by his father's will to us for masses for the repose of the soul of Soracha and of his father, and these masses were said daily. But the more masses he got for his money the more he asked for, and every mass he would have a high mass, so all our time was spent in offering up masses. Every monk in the Abbey spoke of him with kindness and bore with him till he dared to interrupt the mass— Interrupt the mass! said Tadhg. Now, why should he do that? It is true, the Abbot answered, that Brother Ambrose often dozes in the choir and forgets to sing; I have reprimanded him myself for his idleness; and it is true, too, that Brother Michael is often a little flat. He was flat in the *Gloria* on the day Sir Ulick cried out: I am paying for singing that will not wound the ear of God! He would have had us live on watercress and dry bread for Soracha's sake, and he looked on butter, curds and whey as regrettable indulgences of the flesh. At last feeling that nothing we could do would satisfy him, I begged of him to leave us, and to persuade him to do so we offered him the island in the bay as a retreat. Brigit Lonn rows over daily to milk the goats and to see that he wants for nothing. I will take Brigit's place, said Tadhg. Sit thee down, Tadhg, sit thee down; for if we give him into thy charge thou must know what answers to make to him should he question thee regarding us and regarding Soracha. Let there never be any hesitation in thy answers; let them be always: Soracha is in heaven, if not in heaven at least in purgatory. And

if he should ask: How can any man on earth know the justice of God, which is said to be unsearchable? answer quickly that only those who would escape through death from the toils and troubles of life are debarred from heaven. Tell him that St. Augustine has examined the question carefully. I will do that, said Tadhg. But thou hast not heard what St. Augustine has said. And mounting a small ladder slowly step by step, the Abbot reached out his hand to a large folio, Tadhg coming to his help. I see impatience in thy face, Tadhg; I know that thou wouldst run away to see thy master, but a few minutes more will not hurt thee; have patience.

The Abbot placed *The City of God* upon the lectern and was turning over the leaves when the door opened and a small, thin man entered whose dark, pinched face awoke a feeling of antipathy in Tadhg as soon as it was turned upon him. My brother Peter, said the Abbot, and Tadhg rose from the chair that had just been given to him and offered it to Brother Peter, who thanked him stiffly. Tadhg O'Dorachy, the harper, has come to see us. He reached Ireland some time ago from Scotland. From Scotland? repeated Brother Peter. Yes, from Scotland; he was taken prisoner by a party of Scots—where was it, O'Dorachy? A few miles from Athlone, my lord Abbot. I was carried off to row in a galley, and have been tending sheep on the moors of Galloway ever since. A strange and adventurous story! answered Brother Peter; and thine errand is . . .? Tadhg O'Dorachy is a great harper, brother, said the Abbot, and thou, who art fond of music— Tadhg thought he had never seen a more unmusical countenance than Peter's and the Abbot, feeling that he could not conceal Tadhg's story from his brother, related all of it. Hast told him, brother, that the Princess Soracha threw herself from the battlements and that Sir Ulick lost his wits in his grief for her? I have told him the story, Peter. And art reading to him St. Augustine's

judgment of the suicide? I would remind thee, Peter, that God alone is judge. And I would remind thee, Tom, Peter replied with a faint hilarity which ill suited his sour face, that we may gather from Christ's teachings what God's judgments are; else for what purpose, for what end, did the son of God live on earth and suffer crucifixion? That we might know him, surely! Quite surely, Peter, Jesus died that we might know him, but man's knowledge is necessarily imperfect, and we submit to the interpretation of the Church as better than our own. The book is before thee, brother, and I had hoped that we were in agreement regarding the interpretation that should be given to, shall we say, the suicide of Jonah and of Samson.

And going over to the lectern on which the book lay, Peter read for a little while, and then raising his eyes from the text he looked from his brother to Tadhg and again from Tadhg to his brother, as if he desired to claim their entire attention for the words he was about to read. St. Augustine's words are precise. Let him, he says, who would take his own life be sure that he does so under God's command. Jonah, the Abbot remarked, was not a Christian nor was Samson. We must not put aside the Old Testament, not entirely, Peter answered. And then returning to the text he read: No man shall take his own life on account of the sins of another. The Princess Soracha took her life to save Ireland, said the Abbot. No Christian, said Peter, shall take his own life because the world in which God has placed him seems to be unworthy of him, or because he hopes for a better world on the other side of the grave, as Cleombrotus did. What did he do? asked Tadhg. The Abbot turned aside, but his back revealed to Peter the sad fact that he was laughing, and in a doubled exasperation against Tadhg, doubled for he had to repress his anger and give a reply in as calm and even a voice as he

could command, Peter told that Cleombrotus having read Plato on the immortality of the soul, threw himself from the top of a wall because he believed that he would thus leave this life for an infinitely better one. No man knoweth what is in man save the spirit of man which is in him, said the Abbot turning from the window. I would not seem unmindful that thou art Abbot of Ballintober, but every man's conscience is his own. A strange doctrine, Peter, to hear from thee. I have heard thee maintain that every man's conscience is the possession of the universal Church. The Church, Peter answered, does not inquire into any man's thoughts.

And Tadhg, feeling that the moment had come for him to leave the theologians to settle the matter between them, summoned all his courage. I have come a long way in search of my master, and if you have no more need of me I will go to my master on the island. I think I understand St. Augustine very well from you both, and if Sir Ulick should speak of drowning himself or any other way of quitting this life, I'll remind him of the fate of Cleombrotus. The Abbot cried after Tadhg: Call from the shore and Brigit Lonn will come forth from the island and take thee across.

CHAP. LV.

NOW, which will get the better of the argument, and how long will they be sitting over it, and in which of the regions, hell, or heaven, or purgatory, will they put the Princess? Tadhg asked himself on the way to the lake. Wasn't it the fearfullest thing ever done in life to go to an Abbot and bid him search in theology books for the sin that would be the quickest and the surest to bring a man to the gate of hell, with the angels of God and the troops of the damned all pushing him in from behind? And it was a woman put that daring into his heart! I have travelled

the world, but never in all my travelling did I hear of such black daring and never will again. First he'd set up the ancient Gods in Castle Carra, it being the surest thing a man could do to get into hell, and then he'd kill himself, dying an unrepentant sinner that God himself could not forgive without going back on his own laws. But the Abbot was able to withstand him, and it was a great thought to tell him to beware of setting up Pagan Gods lest he might be looking up out of the red pit of hell at Soracha sitting amid the angels, and God himself not far off her in a heaven dewy and sweet as a May morning. It was his luck that the talking fell to Tom; the master would have taken such a hatred for Peter that he'd have said: I'll choose hell if only to be out of sight and hearing of you! But it is no ways sure that you won't be there yourself! The master has his own tongue, and would dare the Devil's self at times. Faith, I'd like to have seen the little prig's face, a scowl on it as black as the Devil's worst, when the master began to shout out: Sing up, Brother Ambrose, sing up! I am not getting my money's worth. I don't know how I'd have kept a straight face upon me! Now there are but a few more rocks to climb and I shall see the island in which my dear master is praying for his lost lady; and I shall pray for her, too, if he thinks that a prayer from me—but are not all prayers equal up above? Yonder is the island standing out of the water like a great bunch of feathers. And seeing a flat rock with the rays of the sun upon it, he seated himself thereon. She may be on the other side; it looks a fair-sized island, and my whistle may have been lost in the trees between us. It is pleasant sitting here in the sun, and if I wasn't wild to see the master I'd let her take her own time. He whistled again, and was thinking of stripping for a swim when a boat put out from the cove opposite.

After a few strokes of the oars ripples began to appear

in the still water. A strong wench, said Tadhg, and as handy as she is strong, one I'd bet that knows how to kill a kid, to quarter it, to hang it, to roast it, and to eat it, one that has a hard palm from the quern and will show me how to grind the corn and milk the goats and make butter and cheese. A fine stroke! He waited to see her jerk one of the oars out of the rowlock into the boat and with the other shoot the boat up the beach, which she did so well that he began to think that she might be kept on to ferry them to and fro. Her strength put him in mind of his years and his sinking strength; he wouldn't be able to do everything, and he made up his mind to say nothing that might lead her to think he had come to replace her. Thou canst whistle if thou canst do nothing else, she said, and thine errand here is Sir Ulick de Burgo? It is, faith, he answered, and I have come from Scotland. A journey indeed, so perhaps I did well to row over to fetch thee, a thing that I don't do always. They whistle, and they whistle again, and then they go their road. Is that so? said Tadhg. Now, don't keep me here talking; step into the boat if thou wouldst talk with the master, and speak to the point, or I shall be told to take thee back again before he has heard half thy say. He was always a bit like that, said Tadhg. So thou knowest the master? Ah! am I not Tadhg O'Dorachy, his harper, who was sold as a slave in Scotland after the battle of Faughart Hill? Then I did right well to fetch thee without going to the master for an order. It was beginning to be lonesome this evening, and I couldn't put off the feel that I'd like to have a talk with somebody. That's women all over, always wanting to talk to somebody, Tadhg said to himself, and aloud: The island seems a fine place. There's no finer island on any lake in Ireland, Brigit answered. The others, said Tadhg, are but brushwood; here there are fine trees— Keep thine eyes for the master! she interjected, and Tadhg stepped

out of the boat. I thank thee, good woman, for pulling me over the water. No thanks to me for rowing over the master's own harper. And now wilt thou find him for me? Have I nothing to do but look for the master? Hast thou not a pair of legs to go and find him? Keep walking and thou'lt come upon him at his prayers in the oratory, or among the trees, or among the rocks beyond over against Castle Carra. On afternoons like this he lies there asleep like an otter, or he plays his harp to the Princess in paradise. Thou hast heard the story? From the Abbot himself, said Tadhg, and he walked up the beach wondering if there was a trick in all this. There could be no trick; yet why did she come over to fetch him and she without an order to do so? And as he couldn't find an answer to this question his thoughts flitted from Brigit to the island itself, and he admired the limestone shingle. No stone bigger, he said, than a man might put into a sling, save a rock here and there, and these not greater than the Normans shoot against each other's castles. He hearkened to lake water lapping, and his eyes wandered over reaches of white sand, thickly studded with tussocked rushes. Above these hard, wiry grass grew in and out of patches of juniper bushes, whins and blackthorns, forming a sort of thicket round the wood, so dense and thorny that Tadhg did not dare to push his way through lest he should leave the clothes that remained to him on the branches. At last he came to a space free from thorn bushes leading into a meadow in which rich grass was springing up. Fine feeding for half a dozen cows, wasted on goats, he said.

As he walked the island seemed to grow bigger, opening out in every direction, with sinuous paths leading round tall groups of trees, elms seeking the sky and not finding it till they had overgrown the crowding beeches. Here and there were hollies and in all their berries; the winter having been soft, the birds were able to find slugs

and worms. Of oaks the island had not many to show, which Tadhg did not regret, for he did not love that tree, saying to himself as he wandered: The young larch in April, and the sixty foot larch in May, loveliest of trees! and he recalled how he had seen in his boyhood larches of that height swinging their branches in the May breeze, so surely rejoicing in the sun that he could scarcely believe they were not living as he was. The birch, too, was coming into bloom, and he was sorry for the pine, dead and stark amid its live brethren. In the branches swarms of bees were going hither and thither among the buds, following the various scents, their droning sounding pleasant as church bells heard from afar. At the foot of the elms primroses were everywhere, and in the meadows cowslips, and the flowers of the ground ivy were hard to distinguish from the dog violets—the very island, Alec, that Marban tells of in his poem written in the tenth century on the occasion of King Guare's visit to him, an island whose birds and flowers and the peaceful life that his brother lived amongst them set the King thinking that perhaps he had lost something in his palace that Marban enjoyed in his lake. I would give my glorious kingship, with the share of my father's heritage— To the hour of my death I would forfeit it to be in thy company, O Marban! are the words with which he takes leave of his brother. And with Guare's words of farewell on his lips it is pleasant to think of Tadhg O'Dorachy seeking his master from interspace to interspace, marvelling the while at the comely trees and the songs of the birds and the colour of the flowers. Marban's island he would compare with the gardens and the parks he had seen in France, thinking as he wandered how much better was this simple retreat than the hills and the dales the French craftsmen would have moulded, the balustrades and the marble-rimmed fountains and the Pagan Gods that they would place under every tree. All the same, he would

have liked some rising ground as the site for Marban's oratory, and his heart quickened when he came to the acclivity on which the hermit had built his chapel. A rowan tree grew by the oratory in Marban's time, for he mentions it in his poem, and a rowan tree was covered with berries when we picknicked there in the 'sixties; so it is pleasant, Alec, to think that a rowan tree flourished when Tadhg O'Dorachy wandered seeking his master. Dreams you will say, but is not a dream the only reality? From generation to generation, the dream outlasts the rocks and the hills. After this little exordium I will return to my story of Tadhg's wanderings on the island till he came to a small pine wood sloping down to the rocky point where, he was told, Sir Ulick often lay when the rocks were warm, looking towards Castle Carra. Now the pines were thick enough to cover his approach and there were thorn bushes near to the rocks, and when he reached them Tadhg hesitated, uncertain if he should rush forward, crying: Master, master, I have come back! or if he should play the harp. The sound of the strings will bring him out of his rocks, he said. And then a remembrance of the master's own tunes coming into Tadhg's mind, he played them, and it was not long before a tall, gaunt figure rose from the rocks. Ulick stood listening, a look of rapture on his face. Thinking, said Tadhg, that Soracha has come down from heaven and is playing the harp, calling him to her! that is his hope; and I must break the spell at once that my harp has laid upon him, else his joy will turn to grief and kill him. Master, master, 'tis I, 'tis Tadhg! he cried, and, his rags fluttering in the wind of his jumps, Tadhg bounded over the tussocked grass and threw himself at Ulick's feet. Master, I have come! Tadhg O'Dorachy, is it thou? It is I, surely, and none other, Tadhg answered. I have escaped to thee from Scotland. He babbled the story of the stag and the nuns, his capture by Scotsmen seeking

a ship to take them back to Scotland; he rambled from incident to incident, and when he came to the story of Maria, Ulick said: It is Tadhg and none other, Tadhg reft of his senses! Not reft of my senses at all, master. All I am telling is the truth, but the joy of seeing you again is so great that I cannot tell the whole of my story at once; it gets confused, but think not ill of me for that. Who told thee of the island? The monks of Ballintober, Tadhg answered. Get thee to thy feet, Tadhg, and talk quietly. Thou hast heard my story and have come here, rowed over by Brigit Lonn? God bless her good, strong arms that rowed me! said Tadhg. Thou wert in Scotland, in slavery? Yes, master, over yonder a slave. And Tadhg began to tell of the Rhinns and the mending of the boat which took him across, and of the harper he had met with; but he put no shape on his story, and seeing that he wearied Sir Ulick, he said: I am getting it mixed again, so I will come back to Brigit Lonn, who rowed me over and told me that I'd find you on the rocks looking out towards Castle Carra. But why didst thou play the old tunes that we wrote together in Normandy years ago? I thought none knew them but me, Tadhg answered; I was forgetting the Princess who must have heard them from you, but she is dead so they told me in the Abbey. The dead are not always dead, Tadhg; they pass from our sight, and to find them we need a second sight. We'll speak no more of this; play the tunes to me that I composed in Normandy long, long ago. That is the tune that Rambaud d'Orange wrote in praise of the Comtesse d'Urgel, whom he never saw and who never saw him. Thou hast not lost thy skill in slavery and wanderings. We must have some harp-music together, and for that we must seek Brigit Lonn, who will row to Castle Carra and bring back a harp. Come, let us find her.

Thou'rt in need of a bath, Tadhg, and of new clothing; get to the other side of me. Faith, your honour never

spoke a truer word, and I'd have been bathing in the lake before I came to you, but was afraid that if I took off my clothes I'd never fit them on again. Brigit will bring thee clothes to-morrow from the Abbey; and here we are now within the quiet wood in which I live, glad to be out of hearing of the babble of the monastery. And kneeling down they said a prayer together, Tadhg's heart overflowing with joy, for he had never dared believe that the time would come when his master would kneel with him before God's altar. And here, Ulick said, rising to his feet, is the paved path down which Marban walked to his cell, where I sleep at night and where thou shalt sleep too. Whilst speaking their eyes sought Brigit by the cove where the boat lay, and found her in it about to start forth. Brigit, said Sir Ulick, is there strength in thine arms to row the boat to Castle Carra? She answered: Though it be a mile from here and a mile back, there is, faith; and the lake is so still that I won't feel the miles going by. Well, then, take this script to the captain of the guard and ask him to give thee two harps. The harp that Tadhg O'Dorachy plays here is one of seventeen strings; tell him to give thee one of thirty-two. And standing side by side they watched the boat gliding through the crystal waters, the rhythmical beat of the oars not dying till the reflection of the Partry hills left the lake.

A lovely evening, said Ulick. The blackbird still sings from the end of the bough; his mate is in the bush hard by and the bird is satisfied; his note tells all that is in his heart. Since you know the birds so well, master, what bird is that little one? A robin? Tadhg, thou hast ears but no eyes. The bird has a red breast but is a chaffinch; see how he flies, the glint of his wings very white in the dun evening. In another hour the stars will be out. Tadhg unslung his harp and played, and Ulick listened, and when Tadhg ceased playing there was

silence on the island. Soon after the bees were asleep and the bats were out, zig-zagging round the shores in pursuit of their prey, and shortly the kestrels came and took birds out of the ivy trees; disconsolate cries were heard; and through the hushed woods the two hermits found their way down the paved path that Marban had trodden long ago. In a very few minutes their lives passed into dreams, and on their awaking in the morning they found two harps hung upon the tree beside them. Brigit had no thought to awaken us, Ulick said. I wish that she had thought, Tadhg answered; it is like a woman to leave harps out all night in the dew-fall. Do you hear this? And he ran his fingers over the strings. A silence fell, and Tadhg felt himself divided from his master, farther from him than he had ever been in all his wanderings. Divided by a chance word, he said to himself for he lives in the Princess Soracha, in memories of her words and ways; and every moment he expected a blow or to hear his master call to Brigit Lonn: There's a man here, Brigit, who would like to be taken over to the other side, and take him quickly, for I'd be rid of him. But the storm he had expected passed over, and he said: The harp is now in tune; I'll take the other one, master. And he bent over it in great ease of mind, for there was now no danger of the upspringing of a quarrel, of blows or hard words, and soon they would be sitting side by side in the sun, playing the harp just as in old times, as if not a day and no marvellous adventures had passed over them.

So it fell out; and repairing to the rocks where the sun was warm, Ulick sang songs that he had not sung for many years, leaving out the lines that referred too plainly to other women, and at every one of these omissions in the poems Tadhg said to himself: He would believe that he had loved none before Soracha, which after all is but the truth. And Tadhg's thought passing

wordless into Ulick's mind, bade Ulick say: The many were but my daily bread, as easily forgotten; she was the bread of my salvation. His love of her is a great grief to him, said Tadhg to himself; yet he would not be without his grief for all the world. And he watched his master pass into the woods, remaining on the rocks till evening, afraid to leave them lest he should intrude upon his master, who was with Soracha, kneeling, no doubt, by the shrine, praying that he might meet her in heaven. He would meet her in hell rather than not at all; but that was long ago and the sins the priest has forgiven must never be thought of again. And to keep his mind unimpaired by theology he played and strummed and dreamed of Maria, and wept a little when he remembered his dear goose, and the fox that had bitten her long neck through; and remembering the Rhinns and the boat, he fell to wondering once again by the side of Lough Carra at the mystery of man's passage through life, his meditation differing very little from the meditation that Maria had inspired when a gander had lured her for a moment from him. Another day wanes, he said; once more the cormorant flies with rapid wing beats down the crystal surface of the lake to some ruin, to Castle Island, maybe, or to the ruin opposite the Brownstone shore; and it was not until the evening darkened that he heard footsteps and saw Sir Ulick coming towards him; and once more they sat together and watched the lake, and once more the moon rose and they slept in the sheeling above Marban's cell.

The next day was Sunday, and the bells of the Abbey were wafted by pleasant breezes over the great marshes. So faintly were they heard that the sound was not much more than the murmur of bees in the ivy blooms and the bluebells and the wild anemones. Thou wouldst not let the Sunday pass without hearing mass, Tadhg? I would not, faith; but, master, you'll be coming with me? No,

Ulick answered; I will never hear mass again in that Abbey, not as long as Peter is in it. 'Tis not the priest but the mass that matters, master! Away with thee; I have no heart to argue thy points. Brigit will take thee across. Go to thy mass, Tadhg, and tell me on thy return if Brother Ambrose sleeps over his singing, and if Brother Michael is a quarter of a tone flat, as he is usually. And you, master? Do not think of me, Ulick answered. I am accustomed to the songs of the birds, to the flowers, and the murmuring of summer in the boughs, and when I am tired of these the lapping of lake water round the shores is enough; and I have my thoughts. Go. Tadhg lingered, loth to leave his master, but driven fiercely away he stepped into the boat. Brigit, too, disliked Brother Peter, and during the journey Tadhg questioned her as to her dislike of the peaky-nosed little prelate learned in theology. But she could not tell more than that she disliked him. I wouldn't confess to him, she said, not for all the money that he'll ever earn for the saying of masses and the like. And Brigit's dislike for Brother Peter awakened a liking for her in Tadhg. She was no longer as uncomely in his sight as she had been the day before, and there was much good sense in her, he thought. And after landing, whilst walking towards the Abbey, they talked of the master on the island who had given so much treasure in masses and was not getting his money's worth, attributing the sleepy singing and the flat singing to Brother Peter. And they returned together to the island with the news that Brother Ambrose had kept awake in his stall and that Brother Michael had either not sung at all or had sung in tune. Sir Ulick did not answer, but a sad smile gathered on his lips and he bade Brigit prepare the food they were to eat that day. The third day thou hast been on the island this is, Tadhg, and henceforth every day will be like these days. We shall pray and play our harps together, and as the sun goes westward

the shadows will fall from the Partry hills into the lake. Winds will sweep across the lake, said Tadhg, raising waves out of the depths, and there will be foam along the shore and dead reeds will come drifting in. Yes, all that will happen, Tadhg, yet it will always be the same day on the island, happy or tedious as we like to think it; but I am glad thou hast come. Then indeed the island will be a happy home for me, Tadhg answered. And they played together that Sunday afternoon and all the next week, and for many weeks day passed over day without bringing any change, each day more melodious than the last. We cannot play the same tunes always, said Ulick; we must compose some more songs. How is that to be? asked Tadhg, for I am like a dry well; and I'm thinking that it isn't new songs that we need but a wider hearing for our harp-playing. Amn't I enough for you? said Brigit, and they laughed and walked together up the island strand.

Of what plan art thou thinking, Tadhg? I can read a story in thy face. There is one in my mind, surely, and it is this: that we might leave the island and travel the country playing our harps. As we did in Normandy? Ulick interjected. Why not in Ireland as in Normandy, your honour? The summertime is all over the country, and will be, with the help of God, till the last sheaf of corn is gathered in, and when the ache for travel is in the feet it's time to tighten the shoe-strings. So thou wouldst away, Tadhg? But I may not leave the island. We will always come back to the island, Tadhg answered, and they sat together on the warm rocks over against Castle Carra so that they might think the better. No, said Ulick, I cannot go. Is it the priests up at the monastery that would be stopping you? asked Tadhg. Not they; and a look of cunning came into Ulick's face that Tadhg had never seen in it before and which he did not like. But to ask a question would be to check the answer. Better to put

my trust in silence, Tadhg said to himself, and he sent stones skimming into the lake as if the number of jumps they made was all that interested him. The fellows up at the Abbey think that they are keeping me from my Princess, but I am getting my own way in spite of them. Now, how could that be? said Tadhg, for I thought she was dead. Have I not told thee, Tadhg, that the dead are not always dead; they change their forms and return to us? So I have heard, Tadhg answered, and he sent some more stones into the water. Leave off throwing stones, Tadhg. I said that I'd get my own way in spite of the Abbey and I have. Soracha comes to see me every night. Does she now, in faith? Nor is it surprising, for when two have loved as ye have loved— Tadhg, thou art beginning to understand. When two have loved as we two they cannot be separated, and it won't be long now. . . . It is always between the day and the night that she comes, and in an hour's time she will be there, floating between the trees. Meanwhile, we'd do well to go to Marban's tomb and say a prayer together. And the prayer finished, they watched. But Soracha did not come; and so many nights passed without them seeing her that Tadhg gave up hope.

Now, Tadhg, Ulick said one night, we may be missing her, and they walked through the woods again, their eyes on the opening in the trees; and it was not long before a whiteness floated by, and Ulick said: Thou art seeing Soracha; she will come again this way. A strange flying whiteness it is! said Tadhg, not daring to speak his mind, that mayhap the whiteness was no more than a snowy owl come to roost in Marban's oratory. An owl or the ghost of a goose, he said to himself, for if a bird can have a ghost surely Maria would find me out. She would be happy on this island, walking after me, eating the rich grass and swimming along the shores, keeping an eye upon me. Of what art thou thinking? Ulick asked. Of

the Princess coming to your honour in the shape of a bird. No bird, but a Princess, Tadhg; and they walked through the evening woods, Sir Ulick on the watch for Soracha to show herself again to him, Tadhg with the thought of Maria in his mind, and they had not walked the length and breadth of the island before a white form came through the trees making for the lake so it seemed, but they were not sure. We will see her to-morrow night, Ulick said, and they lay down. A night will come when she will speak to me, Tadhg. . . . How long he had slept Tadhg could not tell, but he was roused suddenly, he knew not by what, and sat up searching his memory. He stretched out his hand but nobody was beside him, and with thoughts curdling and terror shaping in his mind he ran through the woods, reaching the rocks over against Castle Carra in time to see a whiteness passing down the lake. Master! he cried, but the swimmer did not or would not hear. Tadhg cried to him again, but the swimmer swam on through the grey moonlight. Gone out of my sight, gone to Soracha! And Tadhg remained on the rock till the night waned and the dawn began.

Now, is that how the story finishes? said Alec. There is a little more, I answered. That misfortunate Tadhg doesn't stretch out on the rocks and die of grief? I hadn't thought of Tadhg's end, Alec. But you've been telling Tadhg's story and not Sir Ulick's. Maybe you're right, said I. And how do you think Tadhg should end? Married on the island, Alec replied without a moment's hesitation. But how we are to get him married I don't know. You've set me a hard nut to crack. Your honour has cracked so many nuts that you'll crack this last one. I'm not sure. I shall be back in Westport next year, and the end of Tadhg will not be my story but yours, Alec. Alec replied: I'll do my endeavours, and if I pick up a notion I'll keep it in stock for you.

CHAP. LVI.

ON my return to London letters began to come from America asking for the new books that I had spoken of writing to replace certain old books which I could not honestly include in the canon. The suppression of the volume entitled *Celibates* necessitated a new set of stories about bachelors and spinsters; *Conversations in Ebury Street* seemed to me a suitable title for a volume to fill the niche left vacant by the withdrawal of *Impressions and Opinions*. But no sooner were these books finished than a letter came demanding revised texts and the translation of *Daphnis and Chloe*, a Greek story, and a perfect pleasure my translation would have been to me had I been able to put out of my mind Alec Trusselby and his desire to see Tadhg O'Dorachy married, and of all, his desire to see Tadhg die. But an old man of eighty dying under the trees or on the strand of a desert island is no wise dramatic or pathetic; an eagle cannot carry him off; a pike cannot drag him down. And week after week I sought a marriage and a strange death for Tadhg all round Chelsea and Pimlico, up into Mayfair and by Hanover Terrace, Regent's Park, until unable to endure my life in Ebury Street any longer, I drove to Euston one morning feeling myself to be no better than a mere English novelist, without a strain of Balzac, Turgenev or Tchehov in me. True it is that Trusselby is without any of these three essential strains, but he lives in a country of story-tellers and may have heard the needed anecdote from some old woman by a cabin fire; or he may have come upon the anecdote whilst walking the roads. Or he may have forgotten all about me and about Tadhg! Or he may be dead; men often die suddenly. I must write to Tom Ruttledge from Dublin. And by the next post I got a letter in which I read the words: We are delighted to hear that you are coming to Westport,

but your letter surprises us, for it would seem that you are coming to Westport not to see us but to visit our story-teller. And I stood abashed by the implied reproof, saying to myself: Why should he reproach me for writing for news of Trusselby? And thinking how I might persuade away the unjust suspicion that my letter had awakened, I watched the counties of Meath and West Meath flying past. From Athlone the train jogged with unmerciful slowness into Westport, arriving an hour late. The very hour, I said, that Alec comes down the road from his sheeling in the high wood. I shall not see him till to-morrow.

Breakfast is an early meal at Westport Lodge, and long before ten o'clock I was at my post in the big bow window that overlooked the high road, waiting for Alec, afraid to avert my eyes lest I should miss him. In a moment he will pass out of sight, and will be away on his rounds beyond Castlebar, or maybe some miles on this side of the Sligo border—a great walker; five-and-twenty miles is a mere trot to him. It will be simpler to seek him out in the wood. On inquiring from the young ladies I learnt that I should find his sheeling on the first slopes, and barely was I in the wood when I caught sight of a shirt drying on a branch. He is away but his shirt is at home, I said, and whilst waiting for him to return for it I reconnoitred. He had built a wattled hut in front of a great scoop taken out of the bank, and piled about the opening were several pieces of porcelain. Old, discarded, chipped pots, I said, some without handles. I counted five. Now, what use can five pots be to him, living in a woodland? And my curiosity was so great that I might have been tempted to look into them if the breaking of a dry branch underfoot had not saved me from an indiscretion. So your honour is back! I arrived yesterday, Alec, and afraid you might pass me by—Unbeknownst? he interjected. I am a bit late this morn-

ing, but if your honour isn't in too much of a hurry I'd be glad to eat a bit of breakfast before we start for Ilanady fern gathering or telling each other stories by the mill. Now, I won't be long frying you a couple of eggs, and making a cup of tea. Thank you, Alec; I had breakfast at the Lodge, Alec. He came out of the hut with a frying-pan in one hand and a pot filled with eggs in the other. Your honour is laughing at my larder. A pot is as clean a place to keep eggs in as another, and Winne, the town photographer, put a couple of stitches into this one. In the smaller ones I keep my tea and sugar. But I miss my plates; this is the last one. But servants are always chipping plates, and I may be given a couple out of Mr. Ruttledge's kitchen. I am sure you will, I answered, and the bubbling kettle reminding him of tea, he asked me if I liked two or more spoonfuls of sugar. I never take sugar in tea, Alec. I have no coffee, he replied, and I asked for a mug. I have a jam-pot, he said, looking into my face as if he guessed my thoughts. But even the risk of wounding his feelings and thereby losing the longed for anecdote could not persuade me. Now, put that idea out of your head, said he. Believe you me, this pot was never put under a bed. It was broken in the shop while the children were chasing a cat, and I happened to step in, just to see what the row was about, and the mother gave it to me. But I understand you well enough; the thought of the way pots like that are used morning and evening would put any one off his tea and off his feed. If you hadn't seen me bringing the water up from the brook in it there'd be something to say for you— I wouldn't say you've guessed wrong, Alec. The imagination makes great cowards of us all. That's a great saying, it is sure, and one out of your own writings, I'll be bound. As I was about to reward Alec's acumen by an acknowledgment of the plagiarism, he said: A fine, warm wind from the south-

west is coming through the trees; my shirt ought to be as dry as a bone by now. He picked it from the branch, and I could not but think of the picture in the National Gallery when he pulled it over his head. Whilst he stood in front of me buttoning it down the front he put an almost dreaded question: Has your honour made up a good story about Tadhg's marriage? No, Alec, I can think of nothing, and have come all the way to Westport to ask you if you have been able to arrange the marriage for me. I won't say that the story I've made is up to what your honour could do— But you have got a story, Alec? Good story or bad story, you have got something? Well, I have got something, he answered, but it may not be pleasing to you. Let me hear it, let me hear it! As soon as we get to our old seat under the trees yonder, he said, I'll begin it. . . . Begin, Alec, begin!

Out of sight, out of mind, he said, and Soracha is now forgotten. But she was a great saint while her memory lasted, and not all that the clergy said could stop the processions and the pilgrimages to Castle Carra to do her honour; the people guided the blind and toted the lame to her grave for a curing. But Brother Peter (you remember him!) didn't believe in miracles, and he kept harping away at it that the one who takes her own life can't get to heaven, and he went so far as to say that if miracles were done at Soracha's grave it was the Devil's self did them. This last bit of Peter's talk put the monks of Ballintober into the wrong box; for to tell the people that a woman who had killed herself to save Ireland was stewing in hell one minute, and trotting from hell to Connaught the next minute, to work miracles by the aid of the Devil, got their backs up, so that there was a hump in the county of Mayo as big as a camel's, and if it hadn't been for the Abbot the people might have risen up against Ballintober and shoved the monks into the lake. But the same Abbot was a cleverer lad than Brother Peter, and he

decided that it would be the best of the Church's play to take over the grave and the miracles, and to shut up about the suicide and the broken vows, and about Sir Ulick de Burgo hopping and trotting a nun out of a nunnery. A bad crime, God bless us! and one that the least said about it the better! Sir Ulick hadn't had the chance to do much for Ireland, having been thwarted at the last moment when he wanted to join Bermingham's army. All the same, it is hard to get two lovers out of people's heads, for love has that firm a root in the heart that people honour it, and nowhere more than in Ireland; so Sir Ulick came in for his share of the glory that was going round. That peaky little man Peter was half out of his wits, and there was a deal of ill feeling between himself and his brother, who, it was said, had offered him a hermitage on the island. But Peter wasn't the man to go live on an island; 'twould be too lonely like, for he always had to be scratching and nagging at somebody, and never did he want to scratch and to tear more than he did now; small blame to him, and the way it was! for nobody likes to find himself bested. He tried to work up a party against the Abbot, but that failed on him, too, and at last he had to take the hint from his brother not to say another word about Soracha and the breaking of her vows, nor to put in his spade against the miracles that were performed at her grave, for the pilgrimages and the miracles were bringing cash into the Abbey, a thing that annoyed Peter more perhaps than anything else, for no man can turn his face against money; and so Peter was fairly bet for a while anyway. But he was thinking hard and tight, scratching his head, thinking always, and peeping round every corner of his skull to find a way out of the corner he was in. At last a sight of Biddy Lonn put a thought into his head. That will bring the whole country over to my side, said he. Now, said he in his sermon, and he giving it all out from the altar—now,

said he, an unmarried couple living alone on an island is a disgrace and a scandal, and if we let it go on the parish of Ballintober will be a disgrace and a scandal in Ireland. The likes of it has never been known in holy Ireland before, and it has got to stop, if I have to walk to Rome on my two feet and tell the whole story to the Pope himself. And that I'll do, he said; even if my brother Tom were to hold me by my habit, I'd leave it in his hand and be off with me to Rome.

Now, Peter, said Tom, you'll soon be seeing the mischief you've been at, for Tadhg, whom I know well, will never marry Biddy Lonn, nor any other Biddy; and if you get him out of the island, even if the Pope himself is on your side, there'll be a great falling off in the pilgrims, and the funds aren't too healthy at the present time, that I can tell you. At this the giggling faces of the monks became sad as men's faces do when they find they haven't got the money they expected in their pockets. But Peter had his answer. Tom, said he, you've heard tell of the faithfulness of a dog, haven't you? Yes, Peter, I have. And every brother of the brothers here knows that a dog is true to the death? There's no going against it, said the monks, and they began to tell stories about faithful dogs, and there isn't a thing will put a man into a good humour as quickly as the telling of a story. Well, now— When the last story was told Peter ups again and says: What is O'Dorachy after all but a dog? He has the dog's nature; and the nature of a dog, which I see you all understand, is not to leave his master's grave, and I am only telling the truth when I tell you that he'd marry the Devil's dam rather than leave the island. We have Tadhg properly chained up, and after a talk with me he'll marry Biddy Lonn, or I'll know why. Now, have I got my lord Abbot's leave to get O'Dorachy's consent to the marriage? The Abbot kept a stiff face on him, and then Peter turned to the monks and he said: You know that

a stop must be put to these pilgrimages, for the pilgrims will spread the story of Tadhg O'Dorachy and Biddy Lonn living in sin and we not lifting a hand to stop it, winking at it, indeed. And seeing that Peter had the crowd with him, the Abbot said: Go to the island, Peter, and do what you can. There's no time like the present, as the clock said when it was going to strike. Off on the minute went my bold Peter to the shore, and he hadn't whistled three whistles out of him when the bow of Biddy Lonn's boat shot out of the cove. A fine, strong girl she is too, he said to himself. She'll make a strapping wife for O'Dorachy, and look after his sick bed better than any other she in Ireland. When the boat ran up on the gravel he put out his hand to Biddy and said: Now, the stern of the boat is the place for a lady. I will row you over to the island myself; which he did. And when the boat reached the island, out of it he hopped and offered his hand to Biddy as if she needed his help, for he knew it would cock her up to be handed out of the boat by a priest.

Now, where is himself? On the other side of the island chopping sticks, she answered. So much the better, said Peter. This is a fine strand for a little talk, and we'll walk up and down together. And to make a long story short, I have come to tell you that I am for putting an end to the stories that are going around about you and Tadhg O'Dorachy. Sure your reverence can do that same without turning me out on the lake side without a man to be with me spearing eels, or cutting me a raft of sticks in the wood. We have found a way to put an end to the scandal, myself and my brother, but the greater part is owing to myself. And listen to me: all we ask is that the talk shall stop, and to do that is easy. As his wife— What is it you are saying, Brother Peter? Me to be married to Tadhg, and he as little a marrying man as yourself! Sure he wouldn't know me for a woman at all

unless somebody told him, not even if he met me without my petticoat on, which God forbid! The young marry because they are hot, and the old marry to get hot, said Peter. But what I say is, that no better reason for this marriage could be found than to stop bad talk. Bad talk about me and Tadhg is it? If it wasn't yourself that said it I'd say . . . What would you say, Biddy Lonn? I don't think I'd be saying much; I'd spit in somebody's face. But it being myself that is talking— I'll say nothing and I'll save my spits. But you'll remember, Biddy, that as soon as we make one flesh of you both the talkers will stop as if a pitch plaster was clapped over their mouths. The Devil is always roaming, Biddy, and as nobody can tell when she will meet him we should always be prepared, and I hope to put the ring on your finger this day week. This day week! Is it my ears that I'm listening with? or what is it? This day week I'm to be the wife of that old ancient, and he nearer to eighty than he is to seventy. What sort of good would marriage be to me or to him? Now listen to me, father! Sure, the turf will be green over him in another few years. None of us can foresee the day of our death, and the younger may go before the elder. If you think that I'll peg out before Tadhg, father— I would not say who may go first. We may all be dead before the sun dips yonder behind the Partry hills, and if Tadhg should die before you, Biddy, you'll be free to take a younger man. . . . But here comes your future husband, and I'll ask you to leave us, for I'm going to talk with him about your marriage. I do believe that he's in earnest after all, Biddy muttered as she looked back.

O'Dorachy, said Peter, I've been talking to Biddy about her marriage. Biddy's marriage! And who is she marrying? And what in this and that does Biddy Lonn want to get married for? I see you'd be sorry to lose her, Tadhg. Faith and troth, I would! A firmer hand never pulled

an oar or got the thread of milk out of a goat's tit easier than she. By my word, I won't know how to manage without her, and I more than ever at the beck and call of the new lots of pilgrims, and every lot more wishful than the last for stories of the days in Normandy when we went walking the world with our harps on our backs, singing, from castle to castle, songs that were the cause of many a woman making a fool of her husband. But the sins of those days, I'm thinking, have been forgiven. I beg you to believe, Brother Peter, that if I sinned it was by following his voice on my harp. There was the rape of Soracha— Rape, indeed! Sorra a rape was in it! Didn't it all come from her? Didn't she send her picture to him and he in France out of harm's way? Out of harm's way—in France! He was out of her way anyhow! But the carrying a nun out of her convent— Speak no more of it, for the night we went to that convent is eating the heart out of me, preying upon it, waking me out of my sleep, and springing upon me like a weasel on a rabbit as I go about my work among the trees yonder. But you have been to confession, Tadhg. Aye, faith, and many times. But it is still on my conscience and will be for ever more till I go before my God and himself releases me from memory of sin and death and the world. You have forgotten, Tadhg, that the words of our Sovereign Lord and Master are: Whose sins ye shall remit shall be remitted. True for your reverence! The whole of the Scripure isn't in the mind of the laity, but the clergy is like a keg with the spigot driven in, always on tap. Sure 'tis they can give you a text with the froth on it. . . . I've come to talk to you about your marriage. Biddy's marriage you said a minute ago, Tadhg interjected. Of your marriage and hers. Am I listening to you, father, or am I dreaming? Or are you making fun of me? No fun at all, Tadhg. But, Brother Peter, what would I be doing with a wench and I eighty years

of age? You mayn't know it, but in the days gone by Father Carabine was my confessor, and I told him that having heard much of the trussing of women I thought I'd have a try at it myself, but I made a bad hand of it, I can tell you. 'Tis no lie I'm telling; let you ask Father Carabine, for he knows my story, and you wouldn't go thinking that after coming off the ship I'd make a bad confession to the priest? I know that what is said in confession is sacred trust, but I'll give you a brief that will open Father Carabine's lips. Tadhg, you are talking rubbish. Much scandal has been caused by you two living alone upon the island. The angels in heaven are not purer than we! cried Tadhg, in deed and in thought, too. I doubt it not, said the priest, but the scandal must be ended. If it weren't that my master's tomb is on the island I'd start to-morrow for Jerusalem and die fighting the Saracen. But your master's tomb is on the island, and now I want you and Biddy to talk this matter over together. Does she know about it, father? I was talking of the marriage when you came out of the trees, Tadhg. And I'll bet she was as flabbergasted as I was! She was. Next week— Your reverence doesn't mean that we are to be man and wife in a week? I mean just that, Tadhg. But your reverence has left this out—that a man of eighty is like an old goat; he can't jump, and he won't jump! Isn't it Scripture that if the man can't go in to the woman there is no marriage in the sight of God? Then the woman can appeal to Rome to have her marriage broken? But Biddy won't do that; do you and Biddy talk it over together. And fetch her from the goats, for I must be returning to the Abbey. She'll row you over in a few minutes, your reverence. . . . And sitting on a rock Tadhg watched the boat dwindle to a black spot in the distance, and when the priest stepped ashore, he said: Every minute of our lives God's greatness is being shown to us and we understand it a bit better. No two lives are

the same. Many's the time I've wondered what my end would be, and faith, it took the Church herself to root up a married man in me. A queer sort of a married man I'll be, but I'll be a married man all the same. . . . Making a fine show she is, said Tadhg while watching the boat returning to the island. A fine back she has; fine arms she has, and no mistake. A decent upstanding woman it is that God is marrying me to, and I have no fault to find with anything except myself, that wasn't up to a wife when I was young, and amn't up to one now for certain.

Well, Biddy, said he, so it would seem that we are to be man and wife in a week, if you'll do the priest's bidding and if you won't be expecting too much. I won't expect a thing at all, for at your age, and twenty years before your age, a man has more thoughts for a dinner than for a wife. And how do you know that, Biddy? How do I know that! How do I know anything? Amn't I following a herd of goats since I was a slip of a girl? We're Christians, Biddy; we're not goats. And clasping her hips Biddy stood looking at him, putting the fear of God into old Tadhg, so brazen like was she. I'm not to expect too much, you said! I'll sleep in the draughty hen-house no more, my good man, picking the filth from the pullets out of my eyes; so between this and our marriage let you be nailing up the boards lying about so that we may take our clothes off and pull our clothes on in decency. Now I'll go to draw the milk for our porridge. Yes, and indeed! she cried back, bending over the goats, I've slept long enough and too long in the filth and the wet of the hen-house. I'll sleep snug from this day out! And he thinking of decency before all else, began to wonder which of the two beds he'd plant her into. I'll sleep in Sir Ulick's bed, he said to himself, and then a change of mind coming upon him without his knowing the meaning of it, if it had a meaning, he said: No, I'll stick to my own bed, and she can have Sir Ulick's. And

he set to building a screen out of loose planks, working so hard that the house was divided in halves when Biddy came back with two noggins of milk in her hands. You're the kind man surely! she said. Well, isn't a bed to yourself the least I could do for you? The least, surely, she answered, and he watched her stirring the porridge, till her voice bidding him good-night startled him. And soon after, hearing her kicking off her clogs, he said: 'Tis I should be stretching back on the bed, for the chopping of them sticks has tired me out. Time was when I'd chop twice over what I did to-day without feeling it, but I am an old man now and there's no denying it. There was silence in the hut, and after listening to the silence for a while he began to listen to the other side of the planks he had raised up between himself and herself. Is she asleep or awake? And what would she be at now? And thinking he'd like a peep at her in her bed, he rose up, and putting his eye to a chink in the boards he took a peep, and she sitting on the bed combing her hair, like a woman in a story-book.

CHAP. LVII.

ALEC, I like your story very much so far as it's gone, and my hope is that the end will not fall short of the beginning. I'm only at the beginning, and it will give me great heart when I hear that your honour begins to think I am making a neat job of it. Old men, I answered, are often more indecent than young, and old men that have resisted temptation for a long time are apt to fall into the very sin they have successfully resisted all their lives; for we never get away from nature, not altogether. And I can imagine Tadhg dreaming over the smoothness and the whiteness of the shoulder he had seen, his enjoyment not lasting very long, for on turning over I'm sure he'd start up a little scared, remembering that Biddy wasn't

his wife yet and that he had been guilty of a sin in watching her. Not a mortal sin, but some venial sins are very near to mortal sins, no doubt, and need long years of purification in purgatory before the sinner can be admitted into heaven. You seem to know him, Alec, as intimately as I do myself, and if I know Tadhg at all, it is not the sin he had committed that would frighten him most, but the conviction deep in himself that he would certainly yield to the temptation to look through the chink again. For it is not the sin committed, Alec, that alarms the sinner, but the knowledge that he will not be able to withstand the Devil when he is by again, and of all, that he cannot pray for grace to resist sin, so ardently does he desire it. I can see my Tadhg—forgive me, Alec, I should have said our Tadhg—gloomy and distressed all the next day, in the midst of a trouble so great that he could not do else but refuse Biddy's offer to row him over to the monastery when he began to speak to her about the confession that a man was expected to make before his marriage. I am sure he would suspect Biddy of having caught sight of his eye at the chink, and would answer her: No, Biddy, I'll keep my confession till the day before the wedding. And when Biddy returned from Ballinrobe with a new petticoat and a shawl, the old curiosity would awaken in him again, and he'd hear a voice within him which he couldn't shut down, saying: I'd like to see that fine smock dropping from her shoulders. He would dread and desire the night, and drop back on his pillow racked with disappointment, there being no stime of light for him to see the dropping of the smock. And next day his conscience would worry him so that he would begin to lose his health and to think that he might die before he was married to Biddy. But I am saying too much, Alec; it may be that you are taking quite a different line. Not a bit different at all, said Alec heartily; my Tadhg and your Tadhg is the self-

same lad, whichever of us is telling about him. Then away with you, Alec, and let me hear the end, for I suppose he sees the lank woman sooner or later? Bide a bit, your honour, and let me get the story out in my own way.

Tadhg was feeling weak, and out of sorts, and out of humour, and when Biddy spoke of rowing over to the Abbey for a priest, he said that he wouldn't confess to anybody else but the Abbot. Very well then, I'll fetch you the Abbot. He'll come to confess me if there's a breath in him, or a kick in him, said Tadhg; and these words seeming good to Biddy, she repeated them as she had heard them, raising a smile of satisfaction into the Abbot's face. Off then with the two of them for the island, and when they got within twenty perches of the beach Tadhg rose from behind a rock to greet them. You said that you wouldn't leave the bed, said Biddy. Never mind the bed, Tadhg answered. Be off with you, for my business this day is with his lordship. Are you taking me for a listener! said Biddy. What do I care about your confession? Full sure I am, all the same, that the stories you've got to tell are enough to make a goat blush, let alone a priest. Do you hear that, O'Dorachy? said the Abbot. I do, faith! She's giving it to me as if I was her husband already. The Abbot and Tadhg walked up the path till they came to a pleasant seat under some tall trees, with a fine piece of meadow land spreading in front of them. Now, said the Abbot, I was sorry to hear that you weren't well; but you're looking better than I expected. 'Tis the old mind is sick and sad, my lord. An uneasy conscience? said the Abbot; well, we all of us suffer from that at times, saints as well as sinners. Do they now? said Tadhg. And I wouldn't say but that the angels get a twinge or two when the anniversary of the great revolt comes round, the ones that sat on the fence, that weren't for God and weren't against him either. A

man with a sick conscience sees sin in everything, till at last there isn't a thing but sin in the world, and hell at the heel of the hunt. But you, O'Dorachy, shouldn't be suffering from conscience on this healthy island, where there isn't a chance for any sin of them all to get going. Ah, sin is everywhere, my lord, and last night itself I was a sinner! Now, tell me how you were a sinner; and the Abbot pulled his stole out of his pocket. Well, my lord Abbot, all of yesterday I was building a screen so that Biddy and I should have a room to ourselves and a bed to ourselves; and we both lay down in our beds, she on that side of the screen and me on this one. When I heard her kicking off her clogs I said to myself: 'Tis a fine upstanding woman I'm going to be married to, it is indeed. And I'd like well to have a peep at her, I said to myself. Up I sat in the bed and put my eye to the chink, and I saw her combing her hair. There's no great harm in that, Tadhg. But, you see, my lord Abbot, I was thinking, if I wasn't hoping, that I might see more of her than one arm and the tip of her shoulder. Well, it was but a venial sin at the worst, and I don't think God will treat you badly for it; and you'll get such a shriving from me that the peep you had of Biddy combing her hair won't cost you ten minutes in purgatory. All the same. . . .! What is it, my lord Abbot? What you tell surprises me, O'Dorachy, for 'tis late starting you are, at eighty years of age! You said once, my lord Abbot, that a sick conscience was a conscience with the Devil inside of it, and in a sinner's old age the Devil bests the guardian angel easily. But what was it set you peeping through a hole to see what Biddy was like? Well, I've been thinking of that, my lord Abbot, and I hope to tell you the truth. You know, ever since the pilgrims got their way with Brother Peter, and got their rights to bring the sick and the halt and the blind to Soracha's grave to be cured, some of them row over to the island to

visit Marban's tomb, and some come over to see myself, and to hear about Sir Ulick de Burgo, who loved the Princess and was loved by French women. Now, I have never told this to a soul before, but a lot of them come . . . To hear you play the harp, Tadhg? Why shouldn't they come to hear the greatest harper in Ireland, Finn Lorcan's best scholar! I am all that, said Tadhg, and they like well to hear me on the harp; but what they like better is the stories I tell of the women that used to trip down the castle stairs to sit with Sir Ulick, kissing him and being kissed by him, by the marble-rimmed fountains in their gardens. That's what they like! And if I can throw in a bit of sinfulness they like it twice as well, and tell their friends that I am a better story-teller than I am a harper. Nothing loosens the purse strings like a good story. You never knew it before but let you know it now, that a deal, and a good deal, of the money that comes to Ballintober comes out of the stories I tell the pilgrims. But I'm getting to be an old man now—indeed, I am an old man all out, and I can't put stories together the way I used to. Sure, the more I tell of the bits of sinfulness the greedier they are for them; and now there isn't a bit of sinfulness I can make up and they are complaining. You can't get out of the head what never was in it, and as I've never seen a naked woman in my life I thought it would be a chance now to see one. The anniversary of Princess Soracha's death is coming round, and they'll all be here in a month's time looking for stories. But all you saw through the chink was Biddy combing her hair, said the Abbot, a bit of shoulder, a bit of a lifted arm; and you could see nearly as much when she is rowing you in the boat. But her arms and she rowing the boat, aren't the same thing as her arms and she getting into bed, my lord Abbot. I'm telling you, too, that it would have pleased me greatly to see the smock drop off her shoulders, and I have been

waiting to see that same all the week. Well, she's going to be your wife soon. I'm afraid you are too easy on me, my lord Abbot; not that I'm instructing you. In telling me your sins you're not instructing me. It's hard to reveal it all to a priest, who knows no more than a babe about the wickedness of those that haven't got the sacraments, or only one in a blue moon. It's a wicked thing to look at a woman the way I looked at Biddy, for mind you, she's not my wife yet. She will be to-morrow, said the Abbot; and I'll give in to you this much, that you might have waited a week or two. It would have done no harm; it would perhaps have been better. Now, when I am married to her, will it be a sin for me to ask her to drop her smock before me? That's what I want to know, for if I got one eyeful of her, and she naked, I think it would be a real help to the stories I do be telling the pilgrims. My brother Peter is more learned in theology than I am, said the Abbot, and I think that this is what he would say. He would say: A man may kiss his wife whenever he likes, and he may clasp her if he is minded to put her in child. But if he doesn't want to put her in child, or if he couldn't put her in child if he tried? said Tadhg. I'll look the case up when I go back, but you may take it from me before I get down the tome which all the theology is in, that for a man to take pleasure in his wife's nakedness when he has no thought of begetting a child is a venial sin at the most. That's what I've been anxious about, my lord Abbot. But you couldn't give me a hint about what stretch of purgatory a venial sin will land me in for? Not long at all, Tadhg; not a year itself. And Biddy won't refuse to drop her smock if you tell her that a sight of her figure will help you to tell a great story to the pilgrims. So far I think I can answer for her and for yourself. Now you're not to say a word of this to her till you are married, and married more than a day! At the end of the month

will be time enough. And here comes Biddy, who will take me back to Ballintober. Biddy, said Tadhg, you will take my lord Abbot back. And right glad I am to be able to do so! she answered. And once more Tadhg watched the boat pulling through the still lake till it reached the opposite shore. Biddy was first out of it, and she gave her hand to the Abbot to save him from the shock of too big a jump, and they stood talking together in view of Tadhg, who wondered what they might be saying.

A great good thing it is to have the clergy, for life isn't all eating and drinking, and lifting the neighbour's cattle, and digging a spear into the neighbour's ribs if he started to defend his wife against a spoiler. Without the clergy we wouldn't be more than the brutes of the field. I suppose the Abbot over yonder is instructing Biddy what our lives are to be when we are married, and sure it was a good, clean thought he had telling me not to ask her to get into her pelt before me the very night of our marriage, nor for a while after. But to prepare her for it I'd better let her know that I am in trouble about the story to be told when the pilgrims come over in the big boat to do honour to Marban's tomb, the tomb of a poet, a hermit and a holy man, for he was all three, and brother to a king as well—and to hear my stories about Sir Ulick and the Frenchwomen. I'm thinking he was sweetest on the Comtesse d'Artois, saying always that she was shaped in the mould of old Greece. But what do I know of the mould of old Greece, or old anywhere? and Biddy not a bit wiser than I am, less indeed; for the Abbot himself could not make her understand that a man has to see the story if he's to be telling it. When it comes to the night that the Comtesse goes down to the fountain to bathe herself, I am no better than a blind man trying to tell how the sun lights up the crests of the hills. There she was in her pelt, I'd say, and there

I'd stick, like an eel in the mud. A poet must see, as well as the painter and the sculptor, and I thank my stars that I'm going to see one whole woman the way God made her before I leave this earth. What man is there, barring the clergy themselves, that wouldn't want to? And there are no clothes in heaven; the saints and the angels, every saint and every angel of them, are mother-naked so far as we know, and to see Biddy stripped will be just the same as the peep you might have of the world to come and you in a dream. But I'll have to make a great bother about this story. And he fell to cudgelling his brains as to how he might fool Biddy about the troubles he was in with the story, asking her questions about the look of her body, whether she was like this or that or the other; and when she told him that her skin and her bones were very like his own except for certain parts, he would have to put on a booby face and say that it was a great misfortune to a story-teller never to have seen the same parts. So day after day he made up talks that he meant to have with her, and after about three weeks of that he was fairly worn out.

Biddy darling, said he, there's no getting on with this story at all. What's wrong with it, honey? she asked. Sure, 'tis all about a naked woman, and I never saw one, said he. What is to be done at all, at all? And they looked at each other inquiringly. Would it be asking too much of you, now that we're properly married— Now that we're properly married you'd be asking me to strip myself so that you may be telling what a woman is like to the pilgrims who come here? Well, if you like to spoil the story, Biddy— What have your stories about rampy women got to do with me? she said, and on that she turned into the house, leaving Tadhg a bit scared, saying to himself: I ought to have told her what my lord Abbot said, that every husband had a right to look on his wife any way he likes; she'd hardly put herself

above the lord Abbot. Peter himself even—but nobody knows what that bitter little priesteen would say. While he was thinking about Peter he heard a step and his face flushed, for a thought goes as quick as lightning, and the thought that came to him was that maybe Biddy had gone into the house to strip. But her clothes were all on her, and she had only come back, as he soon learnt for the sake of the argument, saying: Is it you, learned and all in the history of the heroes and the Gods and Goddesses of Ireland (and let me tell you that not an Irish God, let alone a Goddess, was ever seen out of their clothes), is it you that is asking me— If what you are telling me is true, Biddy, the Abbot of Ballintober doesn't know what he is talking about. He is a good priest, said she, and it is his business to know the story of Fial, daughter of Mil, who, when she saw Lugaid looking down at her from the top of a high rock, got a cramp and sank to the bottom of the lake; and though he dived in after her and brought her up, she struggled away from him, saying: Let me die! Let me die! for I'm not the one to live after seeing a naked man. That's one story, but one story isn't enough, and I can match every story you tell with another. And I'd hear the story you'd match against Lugaid and Fial, she said. I'm thinking of Adam and Eve in the garden, said Tadhg. And weren't they driven from the garden by an angel? But not for being naked, Biddy; nakedness is not sin, and now I'd be listening to another story from you. Gilĕ wouldn't marry Omra because he said to her he'd never know a minute's happiness till he saw her naked, and for these words she turned on him. You are no better than a Pagan, she said, for none but the Pagans see each other naked. And Omra went away hungry, chewing his desire, like Connla eating into his apple, it never growing less. You know that story? Yes, I know the story, Biddy; get you on with the one you're telling me. Gilĕ

lived in a great fear of Omra, but great as her fear of him was she had to strip when she wanted a bath. Now there was a well near by that she thought nobody knew about, and nobody did know about this well except Omra himself. He followed her to the well, and when she looked up and saw Omra looking at her, she found her death in the well. But that's no new story, Biddy, but the story you told me before. Fial drowned herself in a lake and Gilĕ in a well, and I bar this last one, so will you be trying again. Everything in Ireland goes by threes, but you'll be hard put to it to find three stories of women that died rather than be seen naked by their husbands. You'll hardly let on to me that you never heard of Sabia, the daughter of Ailill Find? One day she was washing herself in the spray by the clear sand-strewn spring, and she saw out beyond her on the plain tall Cahir coming towards her, and he hasty and rude as an oak. He is coming to enjoy the sight of me in my skin, she cried, but he'll never see me naked and alive! the last words that came out of her mouth, for she held her head under the water till she had no strength to lift it up. You've heard enough now about the modesty of the women of Ireland and about the courage of the women of Ireland not to ask your own wife to strip herself before you, for you to concoct her into a story for the long ears, and they dirty, of the pilgrims. What is a pilgrim after all, Tadhg honey, more than anyone else that you'd show them your wife? Forget about the story, said Tadhg, and remember an old, old man that has never seen a woman naked in his life; and if his own wife don't give him as much as a look, or the half of a look itself, he'll find himself in heaven one day, where the angels and archangels and the seraphs and the cherubs are as naked as the sole of your foot, and that poor old man will be the same silly innocent in heaven that he was on earth. What in the world do you expect to see?

said Biddy. Do you think that my legs, or my anything else, will be different from any other woman's? There's none that would look so near to Mother Eve as yourself. I can see you in my thoughts, Biddy, long and lank— Long I am, and lank too, said Biddy. Let you do now what I am asking you to do, Biddy honey, for when I'm gone from you you'll be sorry that you refused me. It is better to please your husband than to be telling him old stories that have not as much sense in them as a whistle of wind. Well, then, said Biddy, I wouldn't be refusing my husband anything lest I might be regretting it afterwards. Is there a finer place for a woman to walk about in naked than this island, nobody looking on except the birds, and every one of them thinking that Paradise is back again, blackbirds and thrushes, willow wrens and warblers of all kinds, just as it was in the days when Marban spoke of the birds as the little musicians of the world to his brother, King Guare, who came to see him. Well now, if you won't be looking at me stripping, I'll give you a sight of me. And when she comes out of the thicket she's gone behind, he said, it will be like one of the days in Paradise long ago!

And troth and faith, Tadhg wasn't far wrong, for when she appeared the words that slipped from him were: Biddy, you're just Mother Eve herself, come out of the word of God. Now, if you start talking of the Bible I'll run away and put on my clothes. You won't mind me saying, Biddy, that you're round as a gossoon, with sloping shoulders and great big breasts. You don't think them too large? No, he said; I like the breasts because the hips are thin. I wouldn't have any part of you changed, and none of the sculptors of old Greece could have mended you. My master Sir Ulick would have bowed his knee to you, for before a naked woman such as you are, Biddy, her loveliness wouldn't leave a bit of pride in him. Well, it's good to think I am pleasing

somebody! Pleasing me! said Tadhg. I shall leave this world happy now, for though I have never sinned with a woman I have seen God's creation. And is it my back or my front that you like the best? I wouldn't separate the back from the front, but perhaps you are more willowy down the spine. And now you have seen your fill of me, and I can put my things on. Another minute, Biddy, just a minute more. And Tadhg stared his eyes out at her. If you look at me any longer you'll be sick of seeing me! and she took herself back into the thicket. When she came out again in her smock, Tadhg said: You are the finest woman in the county of Mayo, and there isn't a man wouldn't say the same as I do if he saw you without the smock. I like this smock, she said; I paid a good penny for it in Ballinrobe before our marriage. I don't know what you've got against it, or against the petticoat either, and it embroidered. I never heard of a man that hated clothes as much as you do, Tadhg honey. And now that's nonsense enough for one day, and the supper to be got. She threw some sticks on the fire, but the sticks were small and couldn't bring the pot to the boil, and while she was getting bigger ones she found Tadhg sitting where she had left him, with his head on his chest and his eyes turned in, and he all down and out. You'll be better lying a bit, honey. And taking hold of him she pulled him to his feet and kept him on them till hey reached the hut, where she stretched him back with a pillow under his head. The pot's boiling, said she, and she got to thinking about her man, and that he wasn't well at all, at all.

The poor old man, said she; I don't think he's long for this world; and doubtful if he would have much appetite for the bowl of porridge, she added some spoonfuls of honeycomb. A little sup of the milk is all I want, he said, and having drunk he dropped back into a doze. It's a strong weakness is on him, she said, and not healthy

sleep. The sun was up before he stirred, and after a little walk she brought him back to his bed, and he slept till nearly midday, when he woke up refreshed, and she said: That was a fine fright you gave me last night. I am tougher than you think, he said. Now, are you hungry? I have some nice eels hanging up. Tadhg shook his head. And I got a trout while you were sleeping. A taste of the trout wouldn't hurt me, said he. He is very weak surely, she said, turning from the pan, and she made up her mind that she'd go to the Abbey for help. He'd like to see the Abbot anyhow; 'twill cheer him up. . . . But the Abbot was in his own bed and wouldn't leave it for the next three days, for he was trying to cure himself of a bad cold on the chest; but still, coughing or not, he was worried when he heard about Tadhg, and he sent Biddy back with one of the brethren who was said to know what a sick man wanted almost before he looked at him. Now, O'Dorachy, said he, I've brought you a bottle of wine, and you can have a sup out of it from time to time; and keep still between the sups—rest is what you need. And when he went back to the boat he warned Biddy that she must keep him quiet, which she promised to do. Although, said she, he's a restless man, and the minute he feels a little better he'll be about, trotting the glades and thinking of the story he'll be telling the pilgrims, or tuning his harp, or thinking up new tunes to amuse them; for he's bent on making the next pilgrimage a great success, if it kills him. Well, he'll see no pilgrims if you don't keep him quiet! Biddy promised to do her best, and was finely scared on finding Tadhg by the little quay waiting to meet her. You're doing just what Brother Luke said you weren't to do; come you back to the bed at once, and I'll make you a nice warm drink.

Next day Tadhg seemed almost as well as ever he was, and feeling his strength returning, he said he must be

at his story. Can't you make the story just as well lying down? To which he made no answer, but bade her be off. He came back very tired that evening, and finding him weak the next day and with a dawny look on his face, she said: I have business over at the monastery, and you'll be taking care of yourself till I return. Don't leave me now, Biddy, he said. Brother Luke can't help me. I am not long for this world. Now, let you not be talking like that! And after drinking some wine and eating, he seemed again to get his strength. And one day, speaking queer and not like a man at all but the way a prophet might, maybe, he said: When a man gets into the eighties there isn't much of the world left in him and not much wish to live; there does be a secret hankering in old men for a good rest, a thing there's very little of in this world. But what do you want to talk like that for? said Biddy. You aren't thinking of dying on me? You'll get into the nineties before you stop. Well, he said, I may live a few years more. I am feeling better this day than I have done for a long time. But all the same, Biddy, I won't be long in it, and there's one thing now that I'd like you to do for me. I'd see you once more the way I saw you before, so that I may finish the story. Now, of all the men! said Biddy. Can't you be asking me anything else at all rather than that? You wouldn't let me die, Biddy, without finishing the story that I set out to do? I'm going to heaven, Biddy, where there are no clothes at all, and if that be so I'll be all the better for another look at you. Why can't you wait till I join you in heaven, where we'll be looking at each other always without wearying of each other, so it is said. Well, the argument went on, and Biddy felt no wise inclined to consent, but in the end, when she saw that the old man would come to more harm by her not doing it than by her doing it, she went behind the blackthorns and came out the same as before. Hardly any hips at all

on you, Biddy. Ah, that's the great disfigurement in women—the same hips. But I have a big bosom. The bosom goes in well with the rest of you, and it's as you are that I like you. Now, turn a little the other way. He was a long time admiring the willowy curve of her back. Built like a weasel you are, he said, with a dip in the middle. Biddy wasn't altogether pleased at being compared with a weasel, but she didn't like to say a thing that would contrary the old man, so she stood in the way that he seemed to care most for till she got a cramp in one of her legs; and she was about to ask him to let her shift them when she heard a faint cry. Now, what is that? she said, and turning round she went over and had a look at Tadhg. He's gone at last! and she closed his eyes, wondering if he'd know her the next time they met. I must go over to the Abbey, for the funeral will be to-morrow. They'll bury him beside his master, where he'll be happier than he was with me. He wasn't unhappy with me either.

A great story, Alec. I can see and hear it all, the Abbot coming over to the island to get a true account of Tadhg's death from Biddy; and I can hear her answering him: Not a story I'd like to be telling your reverence. Biddy, I would have the truth from you plainly. Since your reverence is willing to listen to how my poor man came to his death, I'd say it was through the odd fancy that took him to make a grand story. . . . About what, Biddy? Saving your reverence's presence, about my rump. About your rump, Biddy! My poor Tadhg set great store on seeing me naked, and every right he had, your reverence, to seeing me whatever way he wanted, we being husband and wife. He had it from yourself, else I'd never have stripped before him. But you haven't told me how he died, Biddy. He died saying that my back was like a willow branch and the round of my rump as fine as anything ever dug up in Greece. A

strange death surely, Alec, and a noble death, for shouldn't every man die in love with his wife? You have exceeded me in invention. The Ballinrobe cock is outdone, and the crow is to the Westport rooster!

CHAP. LVIII.

A VERY few days after Alec's telling of Tadhg O'Dorachy's marriage and death on a lake island, I met him in the high wood, and sitting by him under the beech-trees by the old mill within hearing of the tumbling brook, I said: Whenever I hear a sound of water falling over high cliffs or purling over big stones I remember the stories you told me, and better than any French or English or Italian stories. Hadn't they a great story-teller in Italy by the name of Boccaccio? Alec asked. Yes, Alec; but his stories ramble over a great number of years and about too many people, and no sooner read than they float out of our heads like thistledown. Now, if you aren't making game of me, your honour, putting me above Homer and Boccaccio, I'd like to hear the stories you do be chewing when you're away in London. I often think of the story of Liadin and Curithir, Alec—never were lovers suited with such lovely names before. But his face did not light up with pleasure, and after watching him for a while I began to tell of a young man that came over from the Pyrenees with wolf-hounds. I remember it well, the young man and the wolf-hounds; but the rest of the story belongs to your honour more than it does to me. We wrangled a while, and then Alec came out with the truth, saying: I told your honour stories to amuse you on your holiday, but I'd be glad to know that you aren't given to telling them in London to newspaper boys and their like, for a great harm might come to me. I'm not thinking now of the story of Tadhg's death, for there's no clergy in it to speak of. All the same, I might

have left the clergy out of it altogether. I don't see how you could have done that, Alec, great story-teller though you are. Alec looked round nervously: Would you be speaking a bit lower? There might be somebody hiding behind the old mill. Even so, Alec, he wouldn't hear our talk across all that bubbling water. Isn't it an old saying, your honour, that stones have ears? And isn't it an old saying, too, Alec, that no story means the same to every man that hears it? Isn't it in the story of Bran, or in Briciu's Feast, or in Maine Morgor, or in some other great story, that two men shade their eyes with their hands so that they may see better; all the same, one beholds a boat sailing over the sea with a man in it, whilst the other beholds a man driving a chariot over forest boughs. And the words of the old Irish poet, Alec, are but the telling of a great truth: that the world is a different world to every man that looks upon it. For what sets one man holding his sides with laughter fills the next man's eyes with tears of pity, and all the newspaper boys in London have got hold of the cry that the genius of the Celtic race is to mingle tears with laughter. And there is plenty of both in your stories.

Even this praise did not remove the gloom from Alec's face, and I continued: You are tormented with scruples, Alec, about your stories of spiritual wives. A spiritual wife, I grant you, will not be understood by the ignorant and the stupid, but all men are not stupid and ignorant, and no story can capture the sympathies of the whole world. Every one must be content with its own circle, and I think there are many who will understand that there is great beauty in the story that came to me between sleeping and waking last night, one that I heard years ago in my childhood from Timothy Moran. A story of two children, Dinoll and Crede, who grew up side by side in the north of Ireland by a lake overhung with great woods, through which they wandered on long

summer days, returning home tired, the girl's thoughts on the flowers she had gathered, the boy's on the bees' nest they had found, and the honey they had brought back; and of such adventures they would talk as they lay together in the same bed, too tired for sleep, till in a happy weariness they fell asleep, sinless, to awaken without thoughts of sin. And innocent as our first parents before the fall, they passed out of their childhood into their teens, when Dinoll came under the spell of Christ without Crede having any thought for the change, till one Sunday morning on their way to Mass she began to wonder why he did not speak of the great host of blackberries they had discovered—for the summer was drawing to a close and they were now at Samhain—nor did he speak of the bird they had caught and put into a cage and hung above the cottage door. A girl is quicker than a boy to notice any change in their relationship, and it was a sorrow to her that his eyes were not fixed upon her but upon the lighted candles shining on the white scriptures. Why is he like this? she asked herself; cannot he love Christ and me at the same time? Do those who love Christ put aside all other things? She was afraid this was so, and walked nearly in tears by his side, till she could bear the silence no longer and said: Are we going to rob the wild bees' nest to-day of its honey? No, he answered, we are not, for during Mass I have been praying for strength to waste no more days in the woods. It is not to wander in woods and to watch the bees and the birds and the foxes and the badgers, and all the other wild things, that we were born into this world. You know what I mean, Crede? I do faith, the girl answered. And it almost broke the boy's heart to say: We shall never wander in the woods again; and the girl felt that her heart was broken.

So much I can say without trying to separate their loves telling which was greater than the other. They

loved, but they loved God more than each other, so it is hard to say whether it was in joy or sorrow that they parted. You won't be delaying at home, Crede, after I am gone to the monastery? You'll be off to the convent the day after or the same day? And among the nuns, singing the holy offices of the Church, you'll be gaining a high place in heaven, and I, too, among the monks, may be as lucky as yourself. But you won't deceive me? For though I can live apart from you on earth, it is only because I would be living with you in heaven. You understand me, don't you? And the girl said she did, and her promise was given readily that she would not delay at home but would be on her way to the convent as soon as they parted at the cross roads. But after their parting she broke down crying, finding that she loved the boy more than she thought for; and sitting down she gathered a few blackberries, but she could not eat them, and though she was thirsty she could not bend down to the spring of water. Of what use, she said, to drink? Of what use to eat? Of what use to do anything now that he is taken from me? The only useful thing that I can do is to go into a convent, for when he hears that I am not in it he will know that I have broken my promise and will love me no more.

All the same, though there was great reason for her going to the convent and asking to be admitted among the holy nuns, she did not go, though she found no pleasure in life and was miserable for more than three years, till at length she could bear her misery no longer, and when that happened the thought came to her that she might go to his monastery and take counsel with him. After speaking to him, she said to herself, I may get strength to shut myself up with the good sisters and forget this world and hope that the next world will be better than this one, for it's this that has been a sad world to me and I so young. A sad world! she walked repeating,

for though the spring was singing about her, in the runnel and in the branches, the world was very sad and dark, without beauty in the clouds above the lake or in the blue between them, and the monastery itself was an ugly place on a hill-side, ugly, no doubt, inside as well as out, for as she walked she could see no more than his shaven head, his brown beard and his fresh face, and a cord round his waist.

And wondering whether his eyes would be glad to see her or if they would be scornful, she toiled till she came to the door of the monastery, and might not have had the courage to knock, but the door opened and she was face to face with the porter. It is Brother Dinoll I have come to see—my foster-brother. Foster-brother? We know no such things here! said the porter. But if you are talking of Brother Dinoll I can give you news of him, and strange news it will be to you; for no more than two years was he here when he said that there was too much chattering and talk, too many quarrels and bickerings and things he did not like, and that he'd find time for his own thoughts and prayers better in a forest dell. Now, where may the dell be? Crede asked. I do not know; and if I knew I wouldn't dare to say it, for I can tell by your eyes that you are hungering for him. Hungering I am, said Crede, but it's the spirit hunger and not the flesh. Ah, you all begin in the same way; I've heard that tale too often! said the porter, and he slammed the door upon Crede.

Never, said she, shall I see Dinoll again! But wandering on in the woods, where she hoped to die, for there was no joy at all in anything for her now, she came into Glen Bolcane, and it seeming a happy place to her, she said: I will stay here, for there is a fine spring of water and nuts, too, and these will keep me alive till God in his mercy calls me out of the life of this earth into the life that is in heaven, which must be better than the life of

the world; for no woman can suffer the same pains twice unless in hell itself, where pain goes on forever, and I have done nothing that I know to deserve hell; so once I am dead my sufferings will cease. As she made her moan she heard a voice praying: May God grant us peace and happiness; may the countenance of the King shine brightly upon us when we leave behind us our withered bodies. . . . So, said she to herself, he is thinking of me still. And rising up from the ground she walked and found him praying, and his back being turned upon her she touched him on the shoulder and said: Dinoll! So thou hast come from thy convent, Crede? From thy monastery, whither I went to get tidings of thee. And who in the monastery told thee to come to Glen Bolcane? None told me, for none knew of thy hermitage; but the porter said that the babble of voices in the monastery and the many quarrels of the monks brought thoughts to thee of some quiet dell where thou wouldst be nearer to God. And he spoke truly, said Dinoll, for whosoever would hear God must close his ears to the tongues of men; God speaks very gently, and His voice is heard under these boughs. Beautiful are the boughs, she said, of Glen Bolcane, and the glades were full of flowers as I came along, and the birds were singing so blithely that I thought I was back in the woods we have left. Ah, the woods that we have left! said Dinoll. Thy voice tells me, Dinoll, that thou dost keep a tender corner in thy heart—— For the memories of our youth are all that we have except God, he answered. It pleases me to hear that thou hast not forgotten our woods, our quest for wild honey, and our grief at the loss of the blackbird; and thou rememberest, Dinoll, our house in the woods, the dry ditch overgrown with briers in which we ate our bread and drank goat's milk together and wove a cage out of osier bands for the bird, thinking that we had a song bird. We waited for the brown fledgling

to turn black, but no black came, for it was but the brown mate of the bird whose wings are blue-black and whose beak and claws are yellow as gold, and who whistles as no other bird whistles, catching very nearly the strain of a human melody. We set the dusky bird free to find her mate in the woods—ah, thou hast forgotten! No, Crede, I have forgotten nothing—nor the day we were pursued, or thought we were, by the boar and climbed the great fir-tree together hand in hand and remained in it till evening, nor thy words as we touched ground. My words? Crede asked. Hast forgotten thy words?—— We shall be thinking of this night that we spent in the fir-tree till the end of our lives. There are nut bushes in Glen Bolcane, said Crede, and blackberries over the ridge of the hill at Samhain. And good water, too, said Dinoll; but thou hast not told me why thy promise to me was broken. The most I can tell thee is that I had sense that thy life would not be spent among chattering monks; more than this I do not know. And when the porter, Brother Murchad, told thee that I was gone in search of a quiet dell, thy feet led thee hither? Yes, it was so seemingly, for I thought not of seeing thee; my feet led me, or it pleases me to think that they did. And what wouldst thou here? I would, said Crede, live with thee as thy sister and helpmate, joining with thee in thy prayers and talking with thee over the doings of the day as we lie side by side. Thinkest that this can be again, Crede? Why not? For all things return to the point from which they started. We began our lives together and will end them together, though I do not know how it will all come about.

Crede, thou speakest vain words, for thou art a woman. Glen Bolcane is beautiful in the spring when the lark sings trancedly—we hear him now in the blue between the branches of the trees, but Glen Bolcane is not always as it is to-day; after spring comes summer, and after

summer autumn, and winter nights are cold in this dell. The owl comes here and hoots, so cold is he, and hungry too, all the mice being in their holes. But lying together we shall not be cold, Dinoll. Wouldst thou turn me away? and will it be counted a good deed to do this? And art thou without knowledge that a sister and helpmate is permitted to every hermit? And to be near thee I will take one end of the dell and thou shalt take the other. But then, Crede, there will be no temptation, and we are here—— Ah, that is true; but we were not tempted before, so why should we be tempted now one by the other? We will think of the good Christ that whispers in lonely places to those who would hear him and promises a great recompense for those who live according to his law. If thy thoughts be so, Crede, and thy mind be set upon earning in this life a high place in heaven, let us earn it together, for two souls praying reach God's ear easier than a single prayer. Now come, and I'll show thee the hut that I live in, shapen like a beehive.

They walked a little way together, and leading her under the thatch he showed her his bed and outside the hut the hearth whereon he built his fire. Here I boil my beans and lentils when I have them, he said, and thou shalt share them. And from that day on they lived together, sharing beans and lentils and living on wild fruits and the hedgehogs that God often sent them in times of scarcity, till one morning putting out his hand to touch his companion he found her share of the bed empty. And rising up a great gloom came into his face, and he went forth to seek her; and finding her gathering acorns, for it was autumn time, he said: Thou art preparing for a journey. Whither goest thou? I know not the path that will lead me to a dwelling, she answered, but we live in great Banva, where dwellings are met with outside of the woods, and at some dwelling or from a friendly

shepherd I shall hear the way to the convent, where I shall be safe from sin for evermore. Alas, we were too near to sin last night, Dinoll, to trust ourselves together again. But we are free from sin, Crede, by Christ's help we are free; we are sinless still as we were in the old days in the woods that crowned Lough Riach. We were near to sin truly, and if Christ had not been watchful we would have sinned; and then if death had come—— Think not of it, Dinoll. We are still pure and can come before God without shame on our faces or doubt in our hearts. Was it thy fault, Crede, or mine? There was no fault, Dinoll, either on thy side or on mine, no sin; and to keep ourselves sinless we part. But when my hair is grey I will return to thee, and sinless, as I leave thee. So she knows that no man in the great world of Banva can tempt her but I! said Dinoll, and he returned to his praying stone to thank God that it was so, and to pray to God that he might forget the love that had almost overwhelmed them in the night and divided them from each other till they were grey-headed, lest they should be divided for eternity.

On rising from his knees he wondered at the sight of the trees growing among the rocks on the hill-side, and the rocks, too, and the torrent bursting over them; for Glen Bolcane was no longer a familiar spirit to him but alien shapes, he having no thought for what he saw or touched, nor care even to go to the spring-head to gather cress for his meal. So he withered bodily and became afraid lest he might die, for death, that once had no terror for him but was prayed for, had now become a consuming fear in his heart. If he were to die he would not see Crede again. For him to see her years would have to pass away, and she would not return to him as he remembered her: small and dimpled, with blonde hair curling round her pretty ears, and eyes that smiled always. Smiles and blondeness will have gone from her,

he said, but she will not be less dear to me. But the waiting is long. The days will seem like weeks, and the weeks will seem like months, and the months will seem like years. Time will flow like the torrent. And listening, it seemed to him that he heard time flowing—slowly, oh, so slowly, and he fell upon his knees and prayed that he might think no more of Crede as he remembered her, but of the Crede that would return to him sinless.

At the word sinless he bethought himself of her welfare, and one day yearning to know what had befallen her he left Glen Bolcane for his monastery, and from the porter he learnt that she was in the south of Ireland, where there were many hermits; and he said to himself as he returned to Glen Bolcane: She will become the spiritual help-mate of some great old man. And some years afterwards he went again to the monastery, and got news of her—that she had acquired great fame for her piety and that the prayers which she composed were murmured in the churches by the people waiting for the priest to celebrate the Mass. On hearing these things Dinoll was glad, and then his gladness turned to jealousy, which he had to bear, reproving himself for his weakness and his unbelief, for had not Crede told him she would return to him sinless? But Crede had promised him once to become a nun, and if she had kept her promise he would be living contented in a monastery among his friars, and she too would be living contented among her nuns, a thing she was not now; for he knew that far from him Crede could know no contentment nor happiness, though indeed by living apart from each other they might be earning high places up in heaven, where they would sit, their hands linked, looking on Christ, his mother beside him in the midst of chaste saints, men and women.

Years passed away, and when jealousy began to gnaw at him again he set forth for his monastery, but before he

came to the end of the dell his feet faltered and he said: Twenty years bring grey into the hair, and if I should leave Glen Bolcane and Crede should find me gone, what despair will fall upon me! And on his way back to his wattled hut the thought came to him that if Crede returned she might not know him. So greatly changed am I, he said. But this is not so; my hair may be grey and there are wrinkles, but grey hair and wrinkles will not hide from Crede's eyes the Dinoll she loves.

On coming into his dell the sound of water falling set him thinking that he might scoop a pool out among the rocks which would give him an image of himself, but he had neither pick nor crow. So much the better, he said, for the work will last till time brings Crede back to me. And for years he worked at the pool, and the image it gave back to him of an old man with long grey hair and wrinkled skin overjoyed him and he said: If time has changed me that much, time must have changed Crede. She must be even as I am, yet she does not come. The sun rises without showing her upon the ridge above me, and the evening darkens and I hear not her voice calling. And all manner of wonderings began in his brain lest Crede had sinned and could not return to him, or that some miracle had kept her hair as blonde as primroses and her flesh white and soft to the touch as wool; and going to his praying stone he prayed that God had not stopped the course of time for Crede, not wishing them to see each other again till they met in heaven. But he was to see her once more before Christ taking pity released them from their bondage and on rising from his knees that day he saw Crede coming down the hill-side, seeking her way along the path that wound among the rocks.

The good Christ has answered my prayer! Thou hast come to me after weary wanderings, grey, with the darkness of age on thy face; and though thou hast lain

with four men since we parted, thou returnest sinless to me. Thou art pure, without sin from man, and dear to me as thou ever wast and ever wilt be on this earth and shalt be in heaven. Great is the welcome that I give to thee, and great will be the days that we shall live together, kneeling on the same praying stone, lying side by side in warmth on the winter's night without the dread of sin to keep us apart. Crede, I know all. The great world of Banva is full of thy fame. Far and wide thou hast wandered, leaving an example that earnest prayer to God is no fallacy. Then may God grant us peace and happiness; may the countenance of the King shine brightly upon us when we leave behind us our withered bodies.

CHAP. LIX.

'TIS proud of you they must be in London for the great shanachie that you are; the greatest in all the world, I'm thinking. But maybe, Alec continued, interpreting my silence as a confession that London had not done justice to whatever small talent may be mine, they are passing you over for the bitter jealousy there is in England always of everything that comes out of old Ireland. And didn't they strip us of our lands and our laws, of our own language itself? and aren't all the old houses being emptied now of the fine furniture we made in Dublin? and the pictures, and the silver spoons and dishes, all our handiwork, sold in London, bad cess to them? And aren't they still at the same old scheming, ferreting out our old stories, turning them all into rags and tatters, for not understanding the significance of anything in them. Isn't it the truth I'm telling your honour?

Before I could answer him, Alec began again: But you're a Mayo man like myself, and if you should think

it worth your while to be writing out any of the stories I've been telling you, it is meself that will be the proud man, for it won't be taking back a pailful of potato skins you will be doing like the lady in Galway, but fine spuds in which there is a rich diet. Faith and troth, that is why I have opened my mind to you, for I wouldn't have our old stories betrayed and destroyed any longer than I can help it. 'Tis the nature of stories to be travelling; always footing it one way or the other. So 'tis no use trying to keep them to ourselves, I know that, but I would like them to appear in their emigrations clean and tidy, just that, so that they may see over yonder that we have a shanachie as good or better than their own. The stories you have told me, I said, are the gift of the shanachie of Westport to the shanachie of Ballinrobe. If your honour likes to think of it in that way, he answered, 'tis a great honour you're doing me by comparing me with yourself. Comparing myself with yourself? I rapped out. Why, Alec, we have been telling stories one against the other, and the best of the bunch is 'The Nuns of Crith Gaille'; and by far. We will never be agreed about that, your honour. Well, more is the pity, I replied, and if we aren't agreed among ourselves I don't know how it is to be settled unless we ring the chapel bell and call a meeting with the priest in the chair.

At the word priest Alec's face turned grave, and it came into my mind that I was just about to lose the original Alec which it had taken me a fortnight to evoke. It wouldn't be fair, I said, for me to tell stories against you in your own parish, and the words had no sooner passed my lips than I regretted them. We should do well not to be talking about the priest at all, Alec said, for the clergy do not take kindly to hearing stories told against themselves, even if they be in the years back. And not another word could I get from him. He sat, as it were, frozen in his meditations, and was not roused out

of them till at last I said: There have been great shanachies in this world, Alec; greater than we. Now do you think there were any greater than yourself, your honour? I do, indeed, Alec, though I admire 'The Nuns of Crith Gaille' more than any of my own stories. You'll be turning my head if you say any more about that story, he answered, and he asked me who were the world's great shanachies. Had I shaken hands with any of them? With one, I have. An Englishman? Alec interjected. No, Alec. The Englishman, to my thinking, isn't a story-teller at all. He tells of parsons and croquet lawns, and is home-sick when he leaves them. He tells a tea-party well enough, and has a quick eye to spy out the difference between one woman's talk and another; whether she visits the big houses and if she have the talk of the gentry tripping on her tongue. But there is no diet in the Englishman's stories, if I may borrow one of your own expressive phrases. But there was a great shanachie over in France in the years back. Was there now? Alec interjected. There has been one, troth and faith, I answered, one that overtops all the others, wherever you may go looking for them. Now, your honour, Alec cried, you will be delighting me, begob you will, by telling me something about the great shanachie. Balzac, I said. But no sooner was the name out of my mouth than I began to regret having mentioned him, for it is difficult to pick a story out of the great Human Comedy that would appeal to an imaginative, uneducated fellow, and of all something that could be related on a June morning in a sunny wood by an old deserted mill.

At the end of a long silence, Alec said: Was this the great shanachie your honour shook hands with? No, Alec, the shanachie I shook hands with was a Russian—great fellows the Russians for the telling of a story; the best story-tellers are the Russians, and the best amongst them was Turgenev. And I told him how I had seen this

great man in the gardens of the Elysée Montmartre. Public gardens, I said, in which a band plays, and the people dance in the open air under the trees, if it be fine, and in a ballroom if the weather be wet. So it must have been wet on the occasion that I saw this great man, for he was walking down the ballroom, a great man and a big one as well—as big as Maliche Daly, standing six feet four at least, and with a head on him as white as Croagh Patrick's peak after a fall of snow, upright as a tree, and a walk on him like a stag: a noble, knowledgeable man, one that had lived a long time in the world, but standing apart like a mountain among hills. Like the peak, your honour, said Alec. Just so, I see you understand him: and his stories, too, are as beautiful in outline as the hills, sometimes a little dimmer, like—— Like the Connemara hills in the gap beyond, Alec interrupted, and I answered: Precisely, I see you understand. Did he speak to your honour? Alec asked. He was kind enough to speak to me, though I was but a boy in those days: and I told Alec that the great shanachie's words had remained with me all my life, so wise did they seem; but as they were spoken in the French language, and about books that Alec had not read, it would be useless for me to try to translate the shanachie's wisdom. Alec accepted my judgment as to what could be told and what should be left out of a narrative, and asked me which was the greater of the two, Turgenev or Dostoieffsky. My vote was given long ago to Turgenev, Alec; I plumped for him. And myself wouldn't be saying that there was anything amiss with that plump, Alec returned. But would it be asking too much if I were to ask you to tell me what t'other was like? I never saw Dostoieffsky in the flesh, but in the portraits that they publish in his books he appears like an unhappy, almost afflicted man from the working classes. There is a good deal of Tartar blood in Russia, and Dostoieffsky's flat, shallow

face, with insignificant features and eyes turned up at the corners, recall the Tartar or Chinese type, and were it not for the agitated eyes nc one would suspect he was looking at the portrait of a great man. But the agitated eyes tell that something awful had happened to him, and something very awful did happen to him in the beginning of his life; not many years after writing *Poor Folk,* he was on his way to the scaffold, on the scaffold maybe, when the reprieve came, altering the sentence of death to one of banishment to Siberia. His face in the portrait tells of an unfortunate man, one who was unlucky from the beginning; an epileptic he was, and his life was lived in great poverty; in such poverty, Alec, that there was no time for him to read over his manuscripts before they went to the printer. Turgenev admired his genius, but—— Were they friends? Alec rapped out. They must have known each other, but they couldn't be friends, for they were too different, coming from different classes, and out of a different tradition. Nor were they even of the same race, I muttered. Two great men writing prose narrative in the same language, that was all. There are stories going about, Alec, of a strange visit that Dostoieffsky paid to Turgenev. Dostoieffsky had come to Paris once to arrange for the publication of his works in a French translation, and it is said, mind you, I don't vouch for the truth of the story, but it has got about that one evening, overtaken by his conscience, he rushed off to Turgenev to confess a crime he had committed years ago in Moscow. There being no priest handy, I suppose? Alec interjected. I'm afraid neither of them set much store on priests, I replied; but even those who do not believe in priests like to unburden themselves sometimes; a man who has committed a crime cannot keep his secret always; a secret will out, as you've often heard, Alec. I've heard, Alec said, that murder will out. A much worse crime than many murders was the crime that com-

pelled him to seek out Turgenev in Paris. You must know, Alec, that houses in Paris are very big; and on every storey there are as many rooms as in a whole house here. I suppose that this plan was adopted with a view to fewer servants, for there is no going up and down stairs in a flat; the rooms open one into the other, and Turgenev had come through the folding doors from the dining-room into a white-painted, low-ceilinged saloon, which would have seemed somewhat finicky to Dostoieffsky if he had had eyes to see the grey silk curtains and beautifully bound books. There were comely little book-cases hanging from the walls and standing in corners, filled with choice volumes which could not have failed to attract anybody except a somnambulist, somebody walking in a dream, and that was how Dostoieffsky came into the room: like one in a trance. He knew Turgenev was there, and that's about all—Turgenev only concerning him. He was not aware of the hour, which, as I have said, was an hour after dinner, somewhere about nine o'clock. He was not aware that Turgenev was busy; nor of the embarrassment his name created when the servant announced it: only aware of the torture he experienced in the few minutes he had been kept waiting in the ante-room. For every moment in that room was terrible till the moment came for him to unburden his conscience of the crime committed in Moscow years and years ago. Remorse, he said, has got hold of me now as it never did before, and he stood looking at Turgenev hardly seeing him at all; Vera's face, the girl that had sent him, was much clearer to him. Didn't Turgenev offer him a chair or say something to him? Alec asked. Yes; Turgenev came forward with a chair, but Dostoieffsky waved him aside and walked up and down the room, finding a way through the furniture instinctively without falling over any chair or table, which was wonderful, for he seemed like a man without eyes, and after

a while he found his way back to where Turgenev was sitting. It was last night, he said: She was by me, and it was she who sent me hither. The dead have a strange power over us, and she is dead many years; ten years ago at least. It was at Moscow. One night, Ivan Sergeivitch—— Who is that one, Ivan Ser . . . vitch? Alec rapped out. Turgenev, I answered. Russians who are strangers address each other as son of—— Like the Irish Mac, Alec said, and I answered that it was so. And Turgenev would address Dostoieffsky as Theodore Mikhailovitch. 'Tis a terrible way of saying Mac, said Alec, and to escape further questions I repeated Dostoieffsky's last words. It was one night in Moscow, at the hub of the streets, I met her, after a long day's work, and so brain-weary was I that I could hardly see or hear when a girl's voice awoke me. I'm afraid I frightened you, the girl said. You startled me a little, I answered: but my appearance must have frightened you, my mind was far away. You're not even awake yet, she said. Oh, but I am, I answered, and we walked on together, myself listening to her story of herself, glad to listen to it, to anything that took me out of myself. She told me she wanted to learn English, and the only way, she said, is to get a situation in England. I'm after one, but I'm not certain that I shall be able to get it, for you see, I've no reference. And how is that? You seem a good little girl. I used to be, but I don't know that I am any longer. How did it come about? I was looking, she said, after some children in a tradesman's family, and one day in the park a dog attacked the children, and all three might have been bitten if a student had not come forward and driven off the dog. We met again the next day and the next and the next, and all might have gone on very well if one of the children hadn't walked into the pond after his boat, and when I was asked to explain how I was not by to prevent him doing such a foolish

thing, one of the children answered: Vera was talking with the student who drove the dog off. The student returned again and again, and the upshot of it all was that I lost my situation, being deemed, so it was said, unfit to look after children. As I was in love with Ivan and he with me, I went to live with him, and when he left Moscow I took on with his friend, a Roumanian. And what then? I said. When he left there was another and then another. And then? And then, she said, I found myself obliged to go out into the thoroughfare to find somebody to whom I might take a fancy and who might take a fancy to me. As it happened to-night, if we have taken a fancy to each other. But I've only been out here once before; my word on it; and I assured her that I believed what she had told me, though it seemed to me to matter very little whether she had given herself to three men or to four, for money or caprice.

She had a pretty face and an engaging manner, and every word she spoke revealed a beautiful mind that circumstances could not defile. Now what have you been doing? she said, to change the subject, which was becoming a bit irksome to both of us, and I told her that I was a man who wrote stories for a living, and had come out to escape from the people of my imagination. But why do you wish to forget them? I would forget them, I said, to-night, so that I may remember them better to-morrow, and I'm grateful to you for speaking to me, for if it hadn't been for this little talk with you, perhaps I shouldn't have closed my eyes to-night. And to-morrow will be a day of twelve or fourteen hours. Must you work as hard as that? I must, indeed, for I have no money except the few roubles that publishers pay me for my stories. And I don't know if life will ever become any easier. You see I've only just returned from Siberia: I worked in chains for five years, because I wished to free the people from the police. So you're a convict, I

heard her say, and I expected her to drop behind. I don't mind that, she said, for it was for having a better heart than another the police were down on you. Perhaps you're right, I answered, but I thought it well to tell you who I am, for it may do you harm to be seen walking with an ex-convict. I'm not afraid of that, and I saw that my confession, instead of estranging us, as I had intended, seemed to unite us, which is only natural; the outcast can only speak intimately to the outcast. We walked on, discovering ourselves one to the other, and when I stopped to bid her good-bye it seemed to both of us that for a night at least we were destined for each other.

It was then that I began to look her over, and her clothes, her accent, told me she was a workgirl, the typical workgirl of Moscow, and, I said, she has told me the truth; she has been a nursery-maid and needs money, and I've none to give her. You need money, I said, and in coming with me you are leaving money behind you. Never mind; I would sooner go hungry to-morrow than lose you to-night. But I have some money, very little it is true, so little, that if I were to call that cab I should be ashamed to offer you what remained. We can walk, she answered, and it was not till we were fairly out of the city that her legs began to ache. Let us rest awhile, she said. I shall be able to go on presently. But my lodgings are not very far off, she replied, her eyes fixed on the last cab on the last rank. But I'm dead-tired, and it wouldn't cost much to ride the rest of the way; it isn't more than half-a-mile. Which is lucky, I answered, for the last cab looks as if it has accomplished its last journey. The horse too, Vera said, is near his end; his head is sunk between his forelegs; and it was with a view to shortening his journey by a few yards that we crossed the road. An absurd thought, I remarked, and Vera agreed that the

extra yards could not make much difference, but like me she felt she must save the horse from the labour of dragging the cab across the street. As the cab came towards us the horse fell in the middle of the road. He'll get up when I've loosened the traces and drawn away the cab, the driver muttered, as he bent over the harness. He plied his whip, but the horse was dead, and we turned away, frightened, myself wondering if we should accept the horse's death as a warning, as an omen. I think even little Vera was frightened, moved by the untoward occurrence, but at fifteen one isn't given to the reading of omens. You see she was only a child, and I listened to her prattle, my thoughts wandering between the magnitude of the universe and the accident that had forced this long walk upon us, robbing me, perhaps, of the love night that I looked forward to so greedily. She will be too tired, I said, and that was all I thought about: whether she would be too tired for love.

Vera, I'm trying to confess all. Have patience. Have I not come to him to whom thou didst send me? Am I not telling all? Thou knowest that I am concealing nothing. I had looked forward to seeing thee unpin thy pins, and untie thy bows, revealing each delicate form of thy body to me, and so great was my disappointment that there was no candle that I confided my chagrin to thee, and having thought only for my pleasure, thy hands drew a curtain, letting moonlight into the room.

I can see her still. Certain parts of her are before my eyes; her talk is ringing in my ears, will ring in them for ever, for we may not escape from the dead; the dead never relax their clutch, and it is more often a dead hand than a living that urges a man to his doom. After all, did she not love me? But did I love her? How could one such as I love her? To love one must have leisure, and there was none in my life. For bare life I had to sit at a writing-table for ten, twelve, four-

teen hours a day, and the police are always at the heels of an ex-convict, and as she strove to detain me, her hand on the lapel of my coat, I began to regret that we had met each other, for I foresaw the necessity of breaking with her. When shall we meet again? she asked, in her simplicity. When shall we meet again? I repeated, almost ironically. Have I not told you, I said, folding her in my arms, that I am a penniless convict from Siberia. Why should you wish to see me again? For what? That I do not know, she replied, but I promise not to disturb you while you're writing; I'll sit in a corner very quiet, reading the pages as you throw them aside. Tears were on her eyelids, and I looked away. I cannot, I said: I'm a convict; the police are always watching me. You're a child, and—— If you're afraid to let me come to see you, tell me where you walk in the evenings, and, not foreseeing that we should ever run up against each other in the Nikolskaya, I told her that I walked there nearly every evening, and bade her good-bye, going back to my garret, thinking, not of her, but of the work that would have to be accomplished before the sun set again.

My work left me too tired to go out, and the next day was the same, and the day after; but after several days of work there came a swimming in my head, and I went out to get the air, and to try to forget the people my pen had called into life. It is necessary to forget them sometimes so that we may not forget them when the time comes for work again. The very first thing I saw that night was Vera looking into the faces of the passengers, and turning away from them as soon as she had scanned them, seeking somebody whom she could not find, looking into their faces and turning away again. She is seeking me, I said, and passed up a side street, thinking to escape, for the sense that she was a danger to me was stronger than ever. We're a mutual danger, I said to myself, and perhaps it was the sense that she was a danger to me

that drew me to her next day, for I walked out into the Nikolskaya, asking myself if she was still looking for me. She was there, and I saw her, as before, looking into the faces of the passengers, turning away from them, refusing many men who came and solicited her. She is refusing them, I said, because I am upon her mind. My misfortunes have attracted her. And then I began to argue with myself, asking myself: What imagined doom can there be for us? A girl like any other girl, and, I repeated, a man like any other man, but when I uttered these words I knew I was speaking a lie. For I'm not like any other; and, my thoughts travelling over my past life, I sought to discover if I were as different as I imagined myself to be, but after scanning the terrible history that every year unfolded, I closed the book, frightened, and fell to thinking of Vera. A thirst was upon me to see her; it was not the thirst for her body, not altogether, but the thirst for companionship: my life was lonely, lonelier than it had ever been in Siberia. I reasoned with myself. I said: I must bear with myself, I am done for, but let me not drag her down with me. And I swear that I kept myself for days and weeks from turning into the Nikolskaya lest we should meet. But at last the day came when I began to feel that my dreams were becoming me, and the hallucinations of my people mine. I began to fear my people as one fears spectres. I must escape from them, I cried, else I shall not be able to recall them again. . . . If I do not drive them away to-night they may refuse to obey me to-morrow. And as I jostled through the crowds, neither hearing nor seeing, a voice awoke me suddenly. It was Vera. So I have found you at last, she said. Why haven't you walked here before? I looked into her eyes without speaking. Aren't you glad to see me? she said. Yes, I'm glad to see you, I answered, but my mind is away, and I neither see the people about me nor have I any mind left

to understand what is being said to me. You'll be better presently, she answered. Let us walk on together. Your mind will return to you presently. But if you work so hard you will kill yourself, and then what shall I do? The words touched my heart and I awoke from my dreams of a bastard son, an epileptic like myself; one that had committed a murder and had forgotten it—Smerdyakov.

I am myself again, I said, and remembering at the same moment that I had money in my pockets, having sold some manuscript, I said: Let us go into an eating-house and have some supper. I should be very glad, she answered, for I'm hungry. You haven't eaten to-day? and she answered: I have not. It was unwise for me to take her into an eating-house, for when she had eaten and drunk there was only one thing to do, to take her back into my garret, and after I did that, would I be strong enough to turn her out of it in the morning? I knew that I should not turn her out, for reason is not listened to in such moments. Were it listened to, the world would have ceased long ago; it cannot check even the philosopher; we belong to ourselves, to our instincts and passions, and, forgetful of aught else, I listened to Vera, who said she would be the happiest girl in the world if I would share my garret with her; and we were happy for longer than I thought it possible that I could be happy—for nearly three months. But all the time Vera's golden ringlets and happy smiles were setting the tongues of enviers and rivals wagging, and the police are adepts at indirect means of compulsion. It may have been the police and it may not have been the police, but objections to my work began to arise. I lost some of my customers, and feared that I should lose more. It was not an imaginary persecution, I swear it. Every day it became more intense and determined, till the old fear awoke in me, and my thoughts began to talk to me

again, saying that I had dragged this poor child into a whirlpool of misfortune, for you are that and nothing more, my thoughts muttered. And I yielded to the belief that my life in the world would drag on as it had begun, in disaster. Vera, I said, I am as a leper; you would do well to leave me. Do you care for me no longer? she asked. And there was no strength in me to answer her: Vera, we have had our time of life together; be wise and leave me, for I can only bring misfortune to you. Had I spoken these words she would not have understood them. She might have said: You're talking to me now as the people talk in your books. So I said nothing. She asked me of what I was thinking. Of you, darling, I said, but I was really thinking, though I did not dare to tell her, that it were better that she should return to the streets than remain with me, for on the streets she might meet any evening an honest fellow who would be tempted at first by her child beauty and learn to appreciate her gentle nature and marry her. Many men marry off the streets. Every good girl who goes on the street marries; we must believe that goodness rises above prejudices and conventions. But to remain with me would be certain ruin for her; we had entered the danger zone. We had been together three months, and after three months the flesh wearies a little. It may be that I am wronging myself and that it was the persecution of the police that forced me to persecute Vera. Persecution begets persecution, and every day the desire to get rid of her became more intense. I counted her steps as she descended the stairs, saying: She is farther from me than she was a moment ago, and when she returned I counted her steps as she ascended the stairs, saying: She is nearer to me than she was a moment ago. Something had to happen. Oh, it wasn't murder. I should never have had the strength to murder, I couldn't walk upon a fly on the ground, but it would have been

better if I had murdered her, for she would have suffered less at the time, and I should not have had to come here with a tale of cruelty: determined, premeditated cruelty, intended to drive her away. She never got a kind look or word from me, till I told her one day that she must leave me to earn my living; and you would do well, I added, to be about earning yours. She made no answer but left my rooms without a word, and I continued to write; ten thousand words had to be written that day; they had been promised; and when I had written the last page my brain was so unsteady that I seemed unable to write the address, and it was whilst I sat, my fingers tight about my forehead, that I heard her feet on the staircase. She will be here in a moment, I said, and I cannot look her in the face. I'll go out. But when I return I shall find her waiting for me. The rooms in which we lived were divided by a partition, so that I could not move without her hearing me, so I sat very still, saying to myself: She thinks I am out. At last I heard something drop, and what dropped sounded like a coil of rope—a rope drops differently from any other object, and when I heard her pick up the rope, I said: She has bought a rope to hang herself. But, if she means to hang herself, she will open the door to see if I'm out, and at the sight of her face all misunderstandings will be wiped away; we shall fall into each other's arms more truly in love than we have ever been. . . .

But she has drawn a chair forward and is going to step from the chair on to the table, and when on the table she will tie the rope—to what? I asked myself, and tried to remember if there was a pole above the window. My thoughts slipped away as thoughts do in a dream, and just as the dreamer says: I'm dreaming, I too began to think I was dreaming. She is writing a letter, I said, giving the reason for her suicide; and I became strangely curious, asking myself what reasons she would give, and

if she would find the right words. I must have lost consciousness, if not for long, for some moments, for I remember a table being kicked aside. She has hanged herself, and if I do not strive to shake off this lethargy, and run to her and cut her down, she will die and I shall be responsible. There are moments in every man's life in which he is not himself, in which he loses possession of his free will, if there be such a thing as free will. I must hasten, I said, lest I be too late; but I could not move, and then the song began to sing in my ears: Her death will loosen her clutch upon my life, and in spite of my efforts to rouse myself the time went by. I do not know how it went, and when I awoke, I said: She is dead; it is all over; and dipping the pen into the ink, I addressed the envelope and walked to the office of the newspaper and handed in my copy.

I said just now there was an interval between the tying of the rope and the moment when she kicked the table aside, and that interval was occupied in writing a letter. That is so. She wrote a letter before hanging herself, explaining her suicide. The porter came upstairs, and the police came, and she was carried away, and buried, and disappeared from every human mind except mine. But in my mind she persists, becoming every day clearer, more distinct, and more authoritative. I feel her behind me in the streets: I wake up in the night and see her in the darkness; and last night she bade me go to you: Thou must go to Ivan Sergeivitch, she said, and tell him all; and I believe she sent me to you that I might get peace from her memory. But it would seem that the dead do not know all, for you have listened, not as she thought you would listen, but as I knew you would listen, without pity, almost with contempt. You are incapable, Ivan Sergeivitch, of a noble action or of a noble thought except when you are interpreting the souls that your imagination reveals to you.

You're not a Russian but a Greek—a Greek from the Crimea. All the while I have been telling you my story you have been judging me. . . . True that I came for judgment, but the sympathy of a Russian Mujik would have served me better. Repentance is a word without meaning to the philosopher, and confession disgraceful and unworthy of man. Why did I come here? Did I not foresee you? But Vera sent me, and I did not dare to disobey her. She said that I must unburden my conscience to you else I should have no peace. Why did she send me? She sent me to you, Ivan Sergeivitch, that I might learn from you that there is a worse criminal than I. You, sitting in your palace of art, waiting for me to leave you, saying: How much longer will he keep me from my manuscript, a manuscript in which, no doubt, a nightingale in a wood hard by is singing her honeyed song while a heart yearns in a shadowy saloon, like this one. Rich furniture, vases, pictures. Very sordid and disgraceful my life must seem to you. But I would not exchange mine for yours. Cold-hearted sentimentalist! Dostoieffsky on these words dashed into the ante-room, and Turgenev heard the door close that opened on to the staircase. And what did Turgenev do then? I answered: He dipped his pen in the ink and continued revising his manuscript. Are you sure you've got the story right, your honour? And seeing that Alec was beginning to lean towards Dostoieffsky's view of Turgenev, I said: A man is not necessarily cold-hearted because he knows he cannot allay another's remorse. Remorse, Alec, must burn itself out.

CHAP. LX.

ALEC had gone to his tea, and I sat for a long time wondering, so strange did it seem to me that he could have listened to the story without perceiving that

Turgenev could not have intervened, violence and passion having no part in his life or in his art. And recalling Alec's outburst: And did Turgenev sit there letting the other fellow barge him for an hour without a word in his chops? The Murrigan should have been at him, leathering him all the way down the staircase to the very bottom and into the street! I was annoyed, and left the high wood considering my country's failure, the ineffectual Celt, till the comic spirit getting the better of the solemn, I laughed outright and walked towards my friend's house, to meet him on the greensward with simple, homely talk. After moments of enthusiasm it is pleasant to hear the plain man say: The weather seems settled at last, and to see his goodwife coming from the garden laden with fruit and flowers, to hear the wheels of the pony-chaise, and to meet the young girls returning from their different adventures, a tennis-party or a picnic on one of the islands in the Bay, to watch the young rooks, not yet fully fledged, flopping among the high branches, waiting to receive food from their parents, and, having received it, to see them return to the nests for the night, in response to the impatient cawing of their parents. It is always, I said, out of meditations of what always was, and is and ever shall be that the best and most moving stories come, and my thoughts going back to the story that I told Alec, I said to myself: Turgenev was right to withhold words; his silence was better than words, for Dostoieffsky would seek to interpret his silence, and would be led towards peace as day is led towards night. Where have you left your new friend? my host asked, startling me out of my meditation. He is having his tea, I answered, and repeated the phrase, delighted by its homeliness. He is having his tea. Could a man be about any more useful business? He is having his tea, and no doubt devoutly, I said to myself, and my host asked me if I was going to see Alec

to-morrow. He has been a delightful adventure, I replied, somewhat sententiously, but the adventure has come to an end, and it doesn't seem to me that anything will be gained by continuing it.

Another story from him or myself I could not bear, and to escape from Alec for the next few days I remained indoors till the news came up from the town that he had left Westport, and was not expected back for a week. He is sometimes away for weeks at a time, my host said. I shall not wait his return, I remarked—a remark that prompted my host to ask me if I were going to Moore Hall. And after putting the question he stood by the fireplace pulling at a cigar, still uncertain that it was fully lighted. At last a huge puff of smoke cleared his doubts away, and he turned out of the billiard-room, thinking, perhaps, that I should be left to my memories of the great square Georgian house, one of those built at the end of the eighteenth century in Ireland atop of a high flight of stairs, atop of a pleasant green hill with woods stretching right and left down to the shore of a lake flowing round headlands, past islands, and finding a passage between the great oak wood of Derrinrush and the Partry shore, widening out in front of the great feudal fortresses of Castle Carra and Castle Burke into what is almost another lake, passing round Church Island, and ending in a great snipe marsh under the walls of the old Abbey of Ballintubber, built by Roderick, King of Connaught, shall we say in the thirteenth century; a crescent-shapen lake with Moore Hall at one end of the crescent and Ballintubber at the other—a lake on whose every shore is a ruin, an ancient castle, a burnt or an abandoned house. Even the lake islands were once strongholds, and we dream of these defended fiercely against boat-loads of pursuers till portcullis and drawbridge came to be forbidden in Ireland, and later-day chieftains deserted the strongholds of their ancestors for manor houses, retaining

their vassals under the name of tenantry, the village supplying the big house with hewers of wood, drawers of water, ploughmen, reapers, gardeners, gamekeepers, huntsmen, jockeys, maidservants, menservants, even mistresses. As late as the 'sixties the Georgian house killed its own mutton and beef, baked its own bread, brewed its own beer, and the last brewer at Moore Hall was John Malowney; his wife, Mary Macdonald that was, and her sister, Betty Macdonald, were cook and housemaid. These Macdonalds were probably the descendants of former chieftains, and the original owners of some of the lands my great-grandfather purchased when he returned from Spain. Whilom chieftains descended into the service of landlords, and the new landlords fought duels, there being no castles to besiege! The Irish castle flourished if the cattle-raiders returned with numerous beeves, and the Georgian house if the blood stock were speedy; it showed signs of declension as soon as the "crack" began to lift his leg when the back sinew was pressed after the morning gallop.

My father rose at half-past six to see the horses gallop, though nothing else could persuade him out of his bed before ten. He was a good judge of a horse, given overmuch, it is true, to partial and unsatisfactory trials, but able to bring a horse fit and well to the post. Wolf Dog won a great many Queen's Plates, Coranna the Cesarewitch, just failing to get his head first past the post in the Cambridgeshire. He cantered "home" in the Chester Cup, and this win kept Moore Hall out of the Encumbered Estates Court. Croagh Patrick won the two cups at Goodwood, and Master George all his races till the suspensory ligaments began to swell. I remember the day my father came up from the stables with the evil news on his face, and his valet, who was fussing about the hall chairs with one of my father's silk hats in his hands (in those days men did not go to the stables

except in silk hat and gloves), confided to me in the pantry afterwards that he was afraid Master George's forelegs must have shown some slight puffiness, adding: We shall have the veterinary surgeon down here with his irons. Don't you believe in firing? I asked. Joseph did not answer. Back sinews and suspensory ligaments are treated differently in these days; how, I have no knowledge, but in the 'sixties firing was a great device, and Master George's forelegs were fired; and I believe it was the memory of this brutal remedy that made it so difficult to remain on his back when he was put into training again. Be this as it may, he had me off three times one morning. Slieve Carn was the last of the Moore Hall horses that showed 'form,' but he was too beautiful for a race-horse, 'only a Harab,' as the bookies used to say at Newmarket. His box still is there, and it was a sudden sight of this loose-box that incited me to cry after Tom Ruttledge: No, Tom, I'm not going to Moore Hall. You'd better make sure that you don't want to go, he replied. . . . I'm going down to the office; perhaps you'll tell me when I return.

It seemed unkind to refuse to spend a few days at Moore Hall, but it was impossible to commit myself definitely to the visit. If a visit there was to be it should come about naturally, and I told my host that I would try to come to a decision whether I should visit the house of my birth or go straight to Dublin in the train. I shall be able to come to a decision, I said, between Westport and Castlebar; not before. There's an excellent inn at Castlebar, and I can get all the food I shall require for a three days' visit. You will save yourself a great deal of trouble, my host replied, if you decide now what your journey is to be. I'll order a hamper to be packed for you. No, no, I replied; and invented on the spot some specious reasons for wishing to go to Castlebar by train. I should like to see the railway bridge again, I said, and

half an hour after the tall arches that spanned the valley called forth my admiration once more, and I fell to thinking that if both ends of the bridge disappeared into the woods the bridge would be the most romantic in the dis- United Kingdom. The eastern side of the valley should be planted, I said, and while considering who should undertake this reafforestation, the pretty shapes of the Westport hills came into view, beguiling my thoughts so completely with their pretty outlines that at Castlebar my mind was not yet made up whether I should proceed on my journey or drive to Moore Hall. The road from Castlebar is not a cheerful one; a certain long stretch of bog rose up in memory, and I began to think that it would suit me better to alight at the next station, at Balla. But the train did not stop at Balla and at Claremorris the stationmaster told me that I should not be able to get a car on account of the races. How very unfortunate, I answered; I should have liked to have seen Moore Hall. I should have gone over in Mr. Ruttledge's motor. That would have been better than a car, the stationmaster replied, and the guard blew his whistle.

CHAP. LXI.

BETWEEN Claremorris and Ballyhaunis there is nothing to attract the eye, and the people that entered my carriage and left it at Castlerea were of a class unknown in Mayo in its feudal days. It was vain to try to decipher the markings on the shells; the kind was unknown to me, and I returned to my own thoughts, remembering that when my mother lived at Moore Hall (which she did to the day of her death), she used to say, when I jumped off the car that brought me from the station: Why that gloom upon your face, George? It would

seem as if the sight of your own house is displeasing to you, and not wishing to distress her, I answered: You are mistaken, mother. I was thinking that more trees should have been planted to shut out the view of the lake. A frivolous answer truly, but the best that I could find in those days for a singular aversion. Why should I feel diffident?—why should I feel shy, almost ashamed, among the old places? I often asked myself. Yet that is what I do feel, and unable to find a reason to account for a feeling that seemed inveterate in me, I fell to criticising the alterations that my father had made in the house, trying to persuade myself that it was these alterations that prevented me from feeling at home at Moore Hall. The one that provoked me most was the raising of the roof some ten or a dozen feet for practical reasons, the beams no doubt having rotted under the low eighteenth-century roof. But I could not forget that the small green-mortared slates, like scales, were much more beautiful than the modern slates; large blue slates give a Georgian house the appearance of a lord mayor's mansion-house, and only look well on a high-pitched French roof. My father substituted plate-glass windows for the small panes with eyes in them like grease spots on soup. . . . How lovely! and it was with such æsthetic reflections that I tried for many years to account for a strange aversion. As late as last year, I said, I walked up and down the platform at Athlone, seeking the reason why I was always diffident, shy, ill at ease at Moore Hall; and feeling myself nearer to apprehending a reason that had till now eluded me, I repeated the words: diffident, shy, ill at ease, ashamed, frightened, overcome by the awe that steals over one in the presence of the dead.

Moore Hall is a relic, a ruin, a corpse. Its life ceased when we left it in 1870, and I am one that has no liking for corpses. The wise man never looks on the face of a corpse, knowing well that if he does it will come between

him and the living face. . . . That is why I am unwilling to go to Moore Hall, and why I avoid the Quartier St. Georges, and the two streets leading to the Boulevard Montmartre, the Rue Notre Dame de Lorette and the Rue des Martyrs, for these streets are so intensely my past life that I should feel shy and diffident, just as I feel at Moore Hall, in intruding myself on their presence. It would be painful to me to cross the Place Pigale and to enter the café in which I used to spend my evenings of long ago with Manet, with Degas, with Pissarro, with Renoir, with Cabaner, with Alexis, with Duranty, with Mendès. I have heard that it is now the haunt of ponces and punks, and it is well that the Nouvelle Athènes should descend into animal life, for life is always ascending and descending, and the ponces and punks that assemble there to-day would shock me less if I were to enter the café than a group of modern literators discussing—ah, what do they discuss? is there anything left to discuss?

I turn aside from that café and would not enter the Rue Pigale if I could avoid doing so, for however fair the moon might shine it would not shine as fairly as it did the night when I walked there with Mendès, turning to the right, making for the Rue Mansarde, where he lived with Augusta Holmès. Nor would I enter the Rue Amsterdam again; Manet forbids. Three years ago the mistress of a friend of mine asked me to dine with her, and I did not dare disclose the truth to her that I could not venture into the Rue Amsterdam. A shameful cowardice it was to accept her invitation, and my punishment began almost as soon as I crossed the threshold, and it continued all through dinner, for she lived in 73 Rue Amsterdam. Some sense of premonition propelled me at last to the window, and looking from it down into the deep courtyard I cried out: We are certainly in the house overlooking the courtyard in which Manet painted. She

said: You must be mistaken, for I could not have missed hearing that so great a painter lived here once. But if you think that this house is the house, go to the concierge and ask him: which I did at once, you may be sure, and he said he had heard that a great painter once lived in the house. But that wall? I asked. The wall, he answered, was built a few years ago. The courtyard is changed, I said; but is there a studio yonder? and he answered: Yes, and showed me into the studio in which I had seen so many masterpieces painted, now, alas, an art class for young women. Not another instant will I remain here! I cried; and I returned to my friend's mistress with these verses on my lips:

Triste sous le baiser plaintif dont tu m'effleures,
Oh! combien ton baiser de jadis m'est plus cher!
Les choses du passé, ma sœur, sont les meilleures.

CHAP. LXII.

WE must love for the sake of our remembrance of the kiss we receive, but not for it, and of all, we must not hesitate to resist whatever piercing longings rise up in us to return to the things that we loved long ago. The woman may be more beautiful and more intelligent than she was when we loved her; and the prospects that we remember are, perchance, more romantic to-day than they were when they stirred our imagination, but we must not try to return to them; we shall lose them if we do; by our fireside we can possess them more intensely than when they were illusive actualities.

I can see my father more clearly to-day than I could when I was a child, shall we say, as he sat at the breakfast-table reading the newspaper, suddenly remembering the horses in the stable, and laying down the paper and going into the hall, picking up his silk hat and gloves, that a valet had carefully brushed and laid on the chair

for him. I can hear him call to the red setter that has been waiting for him on the steps. I can see the great hay-ricks over against the stables and the old pine in which the gold-finches built their nests, and brighter than day now is the day when the old servant took me out one morning and showed me the nest up in a high bough. That high bough may not exist to-day; and if it hangs as it did in the 'sixties, it would not be as clear to me at Moore Hall as it is by my fireside in London. By my fireside in Ebury Street I can relive the delightful life of the 'sixties again, seeing everyone in his and her occupation, and every room unchanged, unaltered; my nursery with a print between window and door showing three wild riders leaping a wooden fence in a forest. The schoolroom overlooking the yard is before my eyes—the yard is in ruins but its homely life lives on—the old mule toiling always, bringing up water from the lake. The mule is dead, and my old governess, too, may be under the ground, but she lives in my memory and will live in it, becoming clearer day by day. It would be a misfortune truly to meet her, for no longer would I be able to go with her for long walks beyond the domain out into the high-road, over Anney's bridge; through the long bog to the next bridge, to discover a crayfish in the brook —it is a wonderful thing to see a crayfish and not to know it is a crayfish—and to remember Primrose and Ivory, two ponies dead fifty years or more, and the day my mother drove me to Ballyglass to see the mail coach swing round the hill-side. The coachman held the reins grandly. The guard blew the horn. Why should I go to Ballyglass or to Lough Carra? The boat with sails made out of sheets stolen out of the linen presses lies rotten, or has utterly passed away.

But if Moore Hall lives in my mind completely and independently of the house that stands on the hill-top, why do I continue to refuse to accept my agent's advice

to sell the timber? He says that a thousand pounds worth of trees can be taken out of the woods without injury to them, and if he could see into my mind, he would add: The trees that are growing to-day are not the same trees that were your wont to climb in boyhood. In fifty years a tree changes, even as a man; for better or for worse, all things change. Why, therefore, should you hesitate to fell every tree on the hill-sides, to tear the lead from the roof, to leave Moore Hall a ruin like Castle Carra? Rid yourself of Moore Hall so that you may possess it more completely.

CHAP. LXIII.

THE train passes on through West Meath, and I am puzzled to find an answer to Tom Ruttledge's subtle reasoning, and am forced to plead an invincible repugnance to the felling of the trees, to the selling of furniture and pictures. No; I cannot, I cry, do what you ask; to me the removal of a chair from one room to another is a pain: any change would hurt me almost as much as the selling of the lead coffins in which my forefathers are enclosed. But even if you succeed in preserving Moore Hall unchanged for a few years, says my agent, whom I have cast for the part of the tempter, Moore Hall will certainly fall into ruin. As soon as you have gone, the trees will be felled, and the lead taken from the roof; Moore Hall will be a ruin within a very few years; for not a great many years of life lie in front of you. A fact that cannot be gainsaid; yet for some reason hidden in me, and which I may not explore, I dare not order trees to be felled at Moore Hall. You forget, Tom, that everything came out of Moore Hall: if Moore Hall had not existed I should not have existed, not as I know myself to-day, for it was Moore Hall that enabled me to go to Paris, and to sit in the Nouvelle Athènes with Manet

and with Degas; to gather a literary atmosphere from Hugo, Zola, Goncourt, Banville, Mendès—and Cabaner.

CHAP. LXIV.

AS the train drew near to Mullingar, I said to myself: Moore Hall was built with Spanish gold, and it was the peasants around the house, and the peasants of Ballintubber, and several other properties that enabled me to go to Paris. It is therefore to Patsy Murphy that the Carra edition of my writings should be dedicated. A strange dedication it would seem to my readers, but if justice were weighed out evenly the Carra edition should go to Patsy Murphy, but in this world we do not get the things that are due to us; in Ireland things always take a crooked turn, and instead of dedicating the Carra edition to Patsy Murphy I have decided to dedicate it to my agent for his good offices in obtaining from Patsy Murphy, without undue coercion, the money that I so advantageously laid out in the Nouvelle Athènes. Patsy Murphy has been a patron of literature without knowing it.

CHAP. LXV.

OUTSIDE of the circle of your own life you are unconcerned with the fate of Moore Hall, my agent's ghost insisted as the train passed by Maynooth, and I answered to the ghost: That is not so, for I would prolong the life of Moore Hall beyond my life if it were possible. What is Moore Hall but one of a thousand other houses built in the eighteenth century? he replied. The Nineveh into which Jonah marched for three days before he began to preach passed away so rapidly that the shepherds who fed their flocks among the ruins could not tell Xenophon the name of the bygone city. Why then, said the ghostly voice, should you trouble about Moore Hall? nobody will

live there again. It is true, I answered him; time overtakes the most enduring monuments, but men continue to build, for they are created with that intention, and every day we strive against death. Why then should it be very foolish of me to dream of Moore Hall as a hostel for parsons and curates when I am among the gone? The Irish Protestant Church is very dear to me, and Moore Hall might serve as a token of my admiration of a Protestantism that has given to Ireland all our great men and our Anglo-Irish literature. In conversation with Hugh Lane I once said: I will leave my Impressionist pictures to Moore Hall, if you will include some pictures; together we might found a museum that would attract pilgrims. But Hugh Lane, who was something of a sciolist, answered that a museum was useless unless some hundreds of people visited it daily. Three appreciative visitors, I said, are better than a crowd of holiday starers. At this Lane giggled, but his prejudice in favour of the starer did not relax. Hugh Lane was undoubtedly something of a sciolist. But we are not yet at the end of our imaginations. Another destiny than a clerical hostel might be devised for Moore Hall; a rich American might buy my house. Ireland is nearer America than England, and sooner or later Galway will become a Transatlantic port. A steamer plies from Galway to Cong. Cong is but a few miles away from Moore Hall: why should not some rich American take the place from me? and may this book fall into his hands and inspire him to do so.

CHAP. LXVI.

THE TRAIN passes into Dublin, and I remember that if I hasten I may catch the train to Kingstown, and cross to-night. Why wait a day in Dublin? Let me hurry to my fireside in Ebury Street. An hour later I am leaning

over the taffrail watching the wake of the ship as she pierces the waveless Irish Sea. It is the past that explains everything, I say to myself. It is in our sense of the past that we find our humanity, and there are no moments in our life so dear to us as when we lean over the taffrail and watch the waters we have passed through. The past tells us whence we have come and what we are, and it was well that I refused to allow the trees to be felled, for sitting by my fireside in Ebury Street I should hear the strokes of the axe in my imagination as plainly as I should if I were living in Moore Hall, and the ghosts of the felled trees would gather about my arm-chair in Ebury Street.

THE END

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